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# THE INDEPENDENT

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MONDAY 26 AUGUST 1996

WEATHER: Sunshine and showers

40p (UK45P)

## Rantzen 'a threat to BBC integrity'

Senior colleague accuses star of sloppy and misleading journalism



Esther Rantzen: 'Hurt and shocked by attack'

MICHAEL  
and MATTHEW HORSMAN

A public row between two senior BBC figures erupted yesterday when an award-winning documentary maker accused television presenter Esther Rantzen of a new campaigning programme of "sloppy and misleading" journalism.

In a detailed and powerful attack which sent shock waves through the corporation, *Panorama* reporter John Ware said the latest episode of *The Rantzen Report* had the "potential for seriously damaging the BBC's reputation for fair-minded journalism".

Ms Rantzen immediately launched a powerful defence. Writing in today's *Independent*, she says the attack amounted to

a "perversion of the truth, a twisting of the facts". She also admitted to being "hurt and shocked" by the article.

The unseemly dispute between two highly respected BBC journalists will cause immense embarrassment to the corporation, especially as the argument centres on the crucial issue of journalistic standards.

There is mounting concern among some journalists in the news and current affairs department of the BBC that a move towards mass populism in this kind of programme could dilute journalistic standards in parts of the organisation. *The Rantzen Report* is made by the features department.

The row went public when Mr Ware, who presents *Rough Justice*, wrote a lengthy article

in yesterday's *Sunday Telegraph* attacking an episode of *The Rantzen Report*, a 30-minute audience-based show which Ms Rantzen presents.

The programme - shown a

week ago - highlighted the case of Ian Parker, a patient at the British Home and Hospital for incurables in South London. It used comments from his mother and said that 28-year-old Ian, left brain-damaged by a childhood virus, lacked stimulation from staff and effectively

was left to his own devices to vegetate. The programme makers also used a hidden camera to "expose" Mr Parker's alleged plight and sent in an independent assessor.

**'I have been described as a tabloid journalist ... this is a label I am proud to wear'**  
- Esther Rantzen writes exclusively for the *Independent*, page 3

Mr Ware, who knows another patient at the home, investigated himself and reported that not only had Mr Parker not been neglected or ignored, he had been well-cared for by a hard-working and dedicated staff. He also criticises the programme for using the spy cam-

era when the home was willing to permit filming, and said the independent assessor used by the programme had in fact spent little time with the patient. He concludes: "The journalism in this programme wasn't just sloppy, the programme was misleading and fundamentally unfair." This "worst and brash" kind of tabloid television journalism "was a threat to the BBC's integrity".

Ms Rantzen said she only knew of Mr Ware's attack when she picked up her copy of the paper. "I haven't stopped reeling since," she said. "What pains me most is that he did not bother to call me first."

Mr Ware brushed aside the criticism, adding: "For me the real issue is the factual accuracy of her programme. The only way to check the facts was not to go back to Esther - she's already had her say - but to the original source material." He admitted he had not sought permission from his employers to make the "personal view", but a BBC spokeswoman was unable to say whether he could face disciplinary action.



John Ware: 'It was the worst of tabloid TV journalism'



Just another Bank Holiday weekend...

Things ain't what they used to be on the Great British bank holiday. The days of a windy walk along the prom are fading fast. Revellers at the Reading Rock festival (left) partied under cloudy skies and indulged in the usual mix of booze and balti from traders' stalls. Up the road in Newbury, environmental activists staged

an anti-roads demonstration by cutting cars into slices in protest at the controversial Newbury Bypass (above). And in London (right), remnants of the punk era held their own nihilistic alternative festival at the Briton Academy, known as 'F\*\*\* Reading'. Photographs (from left): Tom Pilsto, John Lawrence and Herbie Knott

### A whale of a time with presents great and small

MICHAEL STREETER

For those facing the traditional Christmas and birthday dilemma of what to get the person who has everything, help is at hand in the form of Valerie the watervole - or perhaps something a little larger, such as Kev the killer whale.

For £15 a year you can adopt one of these endangered ani-



Just don't take it home: Even rhinos can be 'adopted'

mals, read six-monthly reports on their progress and receive your own adoption certificate.

The schemes are becoming big business for animal charities and this autumn are set to get even bigger as organisations cash in on the latest trendy idea for imaginative gifts. Tusk Force, which promotes conservation schemes in Britain and around the world, is to launch wild-animal and conservation adoption schemes for the first time next month.

There is plenty of scope for more exotic, larger beasts to "adopt". Tusk Force offers Boo the bear from Ontario, though, reflecting its size, the fee is a hefty £25. Care for the Wild has run a scheme for some time for elephants, tigers and more recently for chimps, raising tens of thousands of pounds for conservation. The director, Chris Jordan, said that with wildlife appeals dropping by more than 30 per cent since the introduction of the national lottery, adoption projects were the answer in the future.

"We believe the way forward is to have a product to sell such as adoption packs, thus giving the customer an unusual present and at the same time being able to help wildlife."

In Bath, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society estimates that nearly 40 per cent of its £1.5m annual income comes from supporters sponsoring dolphins and killer whales.

The naturalist Sir David Attenborough said he supported increased fund-raising for animals, but was sceptical about how involved the adopter could feel with some species. "What are they supposed to do with whales - buy a bucket of krill to throw to it?"

The favourite adopted animals include (in no particular order, as there are no figures): Tigers, dolphins, whales, elephants, bears.

### Labour battle plan reveals internal rift

ANTHONY BEVINS  
Political Editor

Battle lines for Labour warfare up to and beyond the next election were drawn by the party machine at the weekend, with publication of manifestos by candidates for the party's national executive. It was an embarrassingly public display of Labour's continuing left-right divide.

With leadership sources retreating from threats to discipline left-wing rebels under a Labour government, and an academic study suggesting that as Prime Minister, Tony Blair might have to cope with up to 30 hard-core dissidents in the Commons, party tensions are being aggravated by this year's ballot for the executive.

The contest is exposing the raw policy conflict between old and New Labour, with demands for the renationalisation of water, gas, and electricity, £3bn extra in tax to be taken from those earning more than £50,000 and the repeal of Tory union laws.

Left-wing calls for socialist action are included in the manifestos of six of the 20 candidates for the seven-strong constituency Labour party section of the executive; a political beauty contest won last year by Robin Cook, shadow Foreign Secretary.

The ballot papers now going out to all party members provide a unique platform for the left, with each candidate allowed up to 300 words of uncon-

structed, Old Labour socialism. A Labour leadership spokesman said dismissively last night: "Every time the New Labour case has been put to a ballot of the party membership, we have won overwhelmingly."

But two of the socialist candidates were elected to the seven-strong constituency section of the NEC last year - Dennis Skinner and Diane Abbott. This year, they stand every



David Blunkett: £3bn promise to schools

chance of re-election, along with Mr Cook, Gordon Brown, the shadow Chancellor, David Blunkett, education spokesman, Harriet Harman, social security spokeswoman, and Mo Mowlam, Northern Ireland spokeswoman.

While the mainstream candidates' manifestos generally tread a careful, New Labour line, the appeal for votes coaxes Mr Brown into a call for "unifying socialist values"; Mr Cook says he will urge "a Labour gov-

ernment to help most those whom the Tories have hurt worst"; and Mr Blunkett promises to "eliminate the £3bn backlog of repairs and maintenance in our schools".

However, free of the restraint of frontbench responsibility, Mr Skinner, Ms Abbott and their colleagues let loose with the untrammelled socialism that will provide ammunition for more Tory "New Labour, New Danger" advertisements.

Mr Skinner says: "We need to campaign for full-employment policies and public ownership; maintain and improve universal welfare benefits and pensions; repeal VAT on domestic fuel; repeal trade union laws; impose a minimum wage; phase out private beds in the NHS and kick out the Tory spivs who run the trusts..."

Ms Abbott says: "I am opposed to the [shadow Chancellor's] proposal to cut child benefit for children once 16, and we should put up the state pension by restoring the link with earnings."

It was reported yesterday that a study at Hull University had found Mr Blair might have more hard-core rebels in government than John Major. Mr Skinner and Ms Abbott were among the 30 identified.

A leadership source denied a report that John Prescott, deputy leader, and Mr Cook had forced Mr Blair to consider backing down from threats to withdraw the whip from rebels

#### QUICKLY

**Lilley accused**  
Peter Lilley, the Secretary of State for Social Security, and the head of the Government's Benefits Agency yesterday faced a call for their resignation as they were accused of misleading Parliament. Page 2

**Crisis in the RUC**  
The new Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary will inherit a force which is facing a policing crisis. Page 4

**Lewis's bad timing**  
Chris Lewis was dropped from the England squad for the Test against Pakistan after arriving late for the fourth day of the Test against Pakistan. Sports section

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## news

## MPs 'misled' over benefit hotline

NICHOLAS TIMMINS  
Public Policy Editor

Peter Lilley, the Secretary of State for Social Security, and the head of the Government's Benefits Agency yesterday faced a call for their resignation as they were accused of misleading Parliament over a decision to close down the benefit system's emergency hotline.

The out-of-hours service, which provides emergency cash for claimants hit by disaster at weekends and nights, was described as "the last crucial link

in the wall of the welfare state" by Simon Hughes, the Liberal Democrat MP, who said it had helped 50,000 people in "dire financial circumstances" last year.

According to Mr Hughes, a letter on 14 March to staff from Peter Mathison, the Benefits Agency's chief executive, shows that a decision to close the service had been agreed on 12 March by the Benefits Agency's management team.

The letter, leaked to the *Bermondsey MP* in whose constituency the service's headquarters is based, states that "the

following items of work must not be carried out after the date specified and are therefore not funded ... provision of out-of-hours service (including that provided by the London Emergency Office) - 1 October 1996."

But in Parliamentary written answers given weeks later, dated 25 April and 22 May, Mr Mathison told MPs that the future of the service "is currently being examined" and a decision was expected "later this year".

That, Mr Hughes said, appeared to be "a lie" and Parliament had twice been misled - a

six which MPs regard as unforgivable as it breaches the trust between members of Parliament, ministers and civil servants.

Mr Mathison's answers were given after the original questions about the service had been redirected to him by Mr Lilley.

The letters were published as a formal reply by Roger Evans, the junior social security minister. Unless someone proved otherwise, Mr Hughes said, "on the face of it a lie has been told, and either Mr Mathison, or a minister, or the Secretary of State must carry the can."

"There can't be any confusion. Mr Mathison has misled Parliament and either he goes, and is sacked by the Secretary of State, or the Secretary of State or his minister goes because they have to take responsibility."

The issue could not be allowed to slip away with the agency saying it was a matter for ministers, and ministers saying it was for the agency, Mr Hughes said. The issue, along with the conflict between the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, and the Prisons Agency over last week's decision

to release prisoners, illustrated the "marked difficulties over accountability" which civil service agencies have created.

Despite the 14 March letter and Mr Hughes's attack, both the Benefits Agency and the Department of Social Security insisted yesterday that "no final decision" has been taken on whether to close the out-of-hours service from October. The agency said the service was under review and "a decision is expected within the next month". Mr Mathison would not be resigning, a spokesman added.

## Stricken Japanese tuna ship restarted

ALAN MURDOCH  
Dublin

Engineers from sister ships in the Japanese Atlantic tuna fleet aided by Irish naval vessels yesterday succeeded in restarting the engines of the stricken vessel, the *Taisei Maru*, on which five crew members died in a gas leak on Friday.

In the continuing standoff over tuna fishing rights, armed Irish naval vessels are staying in position 200 miles off Galway, ready to challenge any of the estimated 40 Japanese ships attempting to retrieve long-line equipment left illegally in Irish waters.

Efforts to rescue the *Taisei Maru* on Friday and Saturday were hampered by heavy seas, although the surviving crew managed to ventilate the ship's engine room, where freon refrigeration gas had leaked. Freon turns into a deadly nerve gas on contact with flames or hot surfaces.

Yesterday morning, three Japanese engineers from other tuna ships, along with Irish officers, succeeded in running electrical cables from the Irish fisheries protection ship, the *Aisling*, on to the *Taisei Maru*, enabling them to recharge the ship's batteries and restart its engines and navigation gear.

Captain Liam Donaldson of the *Aisling* said isolated pockets of freon were detected in the engine room, but at safe levels.

Three Irish officers with emergency breathing apparatus have remained on board while the vessel is brought to Cork where it is due this afternoon.

The fishing master, chief engineer, cook, boatswain and chief oiler all died in Friday's accident. Their bodies will be taken off the *Taisei Maru* in Cork for return to Japan.

After safety tests, its gas-refrigerated hold will be repaired to protect the valuable frozen catch, which is normally stored at -50 degrees C.



Crimdon Dean beach at Peterlee, Co Durham, where a baby was found buried in the sand at the weekend

Photograph: Owen Humphreys

## Anger over 'tainted' tobacco funds

NICHOLAS TIMMINS  
Public Policy Editor

The Medical Research Council is to review its guidelines for accepting outside money for research after it was fiercely criticised yesterday for taking £147,000 of tobacco industry money to study the potential benefits of nicotine.

The cash has been accepted over three years by the MRC's Neurochemical Pathology Unit in Newcastle-upon-Tyne to

wards a £200,000 a year project aimed at establishing whether nicotine increases or decreases the development of age-related brain damage in conditions such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.

The "donation" from British American Tobacco (BAT) was accepted by the unit last year. But council members, who include Sir Kenneth Calman, the Government's Chief Medical Officer, were not told about it and there appear to

have been bitter divisions within the MRC over whether money which some see as "tainted" should have been accepted.

The decision to take the cash was yesterday condemned as "unwise" and an "own goal" by Dr Sandy Macara, chairman of council of the British Medical Association. The Imperial Cancer Research Fund said it was "surprised and disappointed" that the state-funded research council had accepted the cash.

Dr Macara noted that news of the donation followed the £1.6m which BAT has given for a chair of international relations at Cambridge University, and the detailing in yesterday's *Observer* newspaper of links between overseas development bodies and the new chairman of BAT Industries, Lord Cairns. Dr Macara said the industry was "desperately seeking respectability as it targets the next generation of smokers, and smokers in the developing world ... They are seeking to compromise the intellectual and especially where there's a medical element involved."

Many Rice, the MRC's head of public communications who is on holiday in France was quoted by *The Sunday Times* yesterday as saying she had

opposed acceptance of the money. "I thought it would be seriously damaging to the MRC's reputation as an impartial source of scientific knowledge. I put this in writing but was overruled."

Nick Winterton, the MRC's administrative secretary, said yesterday the cash had been accepted under a clear framework which states that outside funding must not influence the science, and that the work would anyway have been funded by the MRC if it had the cash. The BAT money was just one of "hundreds" of such outside sources of finance, although the only one currently involving tobacco money. The decision to take BAT's cash had been "a difficult one" debated between the unit and head office staff, who had been satisfied the rules had been followed.

Given the criticism, however, "we will be looking at how such future agreements might be pursued. We would be anxious to avoid any suggestion that the work itself could be in any way influenced by the source of funds. If people perceive that to be happening, even if it is not the case and we do not believe it to be the case here, then obviously we would have to re-

think. The perception is itself a serious cause for concern."

Richard Peto, co-director of the ICRF and MRC Epidemiology Unit in Oxford and a leading specialist on the health effects of smoking, said the habit claims 100,000 lives a year in the UK. "I would like to see a convention which governed the acceptance of such money, together with a ban on all tobacco promotion." The possible beneficial effects of nicotine should be investigated, he said, but preferably not with "tobacco industry money."

BAT was unavailable to comment on the research grant, but a spokesman for BAT Industries denied outright that BAT was seeking to buy influence. That idea was "preposterous".

The MRC said it had a formal policy of supplementing public cash with money from other sources "where this does not conflict with its mission" or "compromise the scientific integrity of the work". BAT's funding had been subject to strict conditions, the council said, including one that BAT may not make reference to the research findings without the MRC's written consent. It was "most unlikely" that would be given, a spokesman said.

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## Prison chief returns to face 'early release' crisis

CLARE GARNER  
and ANTHONY BEVINS

Richard Tilt, director general of the Prison Service, yesterday cut short his holiday in Italy because of the growing pressure over the "early release" crisis.

But Labour home secretary, Michael Howard, against any temptation he might feel to use Mr Tilt as a scapegoat for his own failings.

"Even if Michael Howard's version of events is accepted, Mr Howard said, the Home Office was told of the release of prisoners on Wednesday night.

"It stood back for two days and let prisoners walk free. Therefore any attempt to scapegoat Richard Tilt will be seen by the public as a classic Michael Howard tactic to pass the buck when things go wrong."

The mismanagement follows directly from the farcical distinction between policy and operations designed to ensure that

when things go wrong Michael Howard never takes the blame.

Mr Tilt, who had been on a walking holiday in northern Italy with his wife Kate, decided to return early because of the "difficult" week ahead. A spokesman for the Prison Service said: "He feels it is going to be a difficult week, especially if there is a court case."

Mr Tilt, who replaced the sacked Derek Lewis just four months ago, will be "back at his desk" today. As questions were being raised about which of the top jail officials' heads would roll, Mr Tilt told the *Mail on Sunday* that he had no intention of quitting over the fiasco.

There was speculation last night about whether Mr Tilt had been pressured into abandoning his holiday three days early. He had told the *Mail on Sunday* that he did not intend to return immediately.

But the Prison Service spokesman dismissed any suggestion that Mr Tilt had been forced to return. "Richard has

decided to come back of his own accord. Perhaps he decided in the last 12 hours that it would be better to return."

The Prison Service has already confirmed that Mr Tilt knew about the "early" releases, based on a new interpretation of time spent on remand, before they began on the 16 August, but said his number two, Alan Walker, found out only when he returned from his holiday last Wednesday. Mr Walker, who has been acting jail chief since Mr Tilt went on holiday last Thursday, suggested he could step down if an inquiry found he had been "personally culpable".

A total of 80 prisoners were released from jails before Mr Howard ordered a halt. He has ordered a full report into the affair.

Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, said: "This has become the most extraordinary situation in recent penal history. It's gone from comedy through to farce."

## SIGNIFICANT SHORTS

**Cowboy wheelclampers** will be regulated by a Labour Government, Labour's home affairs spokesman, Jack Straw, said last night. Since publishing a consultation paper in 1993, the Government has taken no action on the clampers, who are able to hold motorists to ransom if they park on private land.

However, Mr Straw said Labour would introduce statutory regulation as part of plans to curb the private security industry. He said it was intolerable that clampers, who are able to hold motorists to ransom if they park on private land, had threatened to hold a woman's three-year-old daughter as surety while she collected a £60 penalty from a bank and that a hearse should be clamped outside a church, with the corpse still in the back. "Everybody, apart from the cowboys and the Tory party, wants these rogue clampers regulated," Anthony Bevis.

**Legal observers** monitoring an anti-road protest in Brighton the weekend faced criticism from the police for their "heavy-handed" tactics. Violence erupted when police foiled the protesters from the Reclaim the Streets pressure group by seizing sound equipment and scaffolding. Officers in riot gear arrested 80 people - including two of the observers - and 49 now face charges.

Colin Chalmers, of the Brighton Legal Defence and Monitoring Group, an organisation set up to advise demonstrators, said he was appalled at the tactics. "We are there to help people who get arrested. I don't know why they arrested us. They said it was on charges of conspiracy to cause a nuisance and obstruct the highway. Their actions were totally heavy-handed." A spokesman for Sussex police was not available for comment. *Matthew Brace*

Cycle logical warfare, page 12

**Holidaymakers** will face long delays today as they head back from their short breaks after the Bank Holiday and can expect severe disruption tomorrow due to rail strikes. AA Roadwatch warned motorists to stagger their journeys home to prevent long traffic jams clogging the motorway network.

The exodus to the coast on Friday saw lengthy delays on all major routes to holiday destinations and tomorrow's threatened rail strike will bring little comfort to those heading back to work after the holiday.

Poor weather blighted the weekend as rain swept many areas and winds lowered temperatures. *Matthew Brace*

**Britain's double Paralympic gold medal winner** Noel Thatcher, yesterday called off his bid to win a third at the Atlanta games. The partially-sighted athlete, who won the 5,000 and 10,000 metres titles despite a stress fracture in his leg, had to pull out of the marathon after doctors warned him that his bones could shatter on the sharp hills. He said: "I listened to the doctor and he told me about the risks, and I had a lot of thinking to do before deciding."

**Special sanctuaries** may soon be set up for dumped pet terrapins, which are posing problems for Britain's native wildlife with their powerful bite. A country-wide survey is under way to collect information about the apparently increasing number and distribution of abandoned water tortoises. Small terrapins have long been favourite pets but interest in them was hugely boosted during the craze for Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles back in the early 1990s. Environmentalists are now exploring ways of humanely capturing and caring for reptiles whose disenchanted former owners have illegally released them into the wild.

**A man** was recovering in hospital after sinking up to his neck in shifting sands during an 11-hour ordeal. Terry Howlett, 29, of Darlington, Co Durham, was close to being submerged in the sea at Morecambe Bay, Lancashire, when he was eventually pulled to safety, coastguards said.

He had been for a walk on the sands at 10pm on Saturday when he became stuck in mud up to his knees. "He panicked and sank deeper and deeper overnight until the mud reached his waist," a coastguard spokesman said.

**A coffee-stained piece of paper** containing Paul McCartney's handwritten lyrics for the classic Beatles track "With a Little Help From My Friends" is set to fetch up to £80,000 at an auction next month. The piece of musical history has emerged from a private collection nearly 30 years after McCartney first wrote it for inclusion in the 1967 album, *Sergeant Pepper's*. "What would you do if I sang out of tune?" wrote McCartney, adding "Would you throw a tomato at me?" He later substituted the line: "Would you stand up and walk out on me?"

**Seven winners** each scooped more than £1m in the National Lottery draw. They shared a jackpot of £7,665,700, winning £1,095,100 each. The winning numbers were 8, 11, 14, 18, 33 and 44, and the bonus ball was 34.

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هَذَا مِنَ الْأَصْلِ



**Making of a media star:** Consumer guru, campaigner, talk-show queen, Esther Rantzen has graced our screens for 30 years

# Brickbats, bouquets and first lady of tabloid TV

MICHAEL STREETER

The demise of *That's Life* had seemed to signal the end of Esther Rantzen's TV life. After 21 years as its presenter, and after attracting a peak of 18 million viewers, when the BBC pulled the plug two years ago, Ms Rantzen was so closely identified with the programme that she seemed destined to slip into relative obscurity.

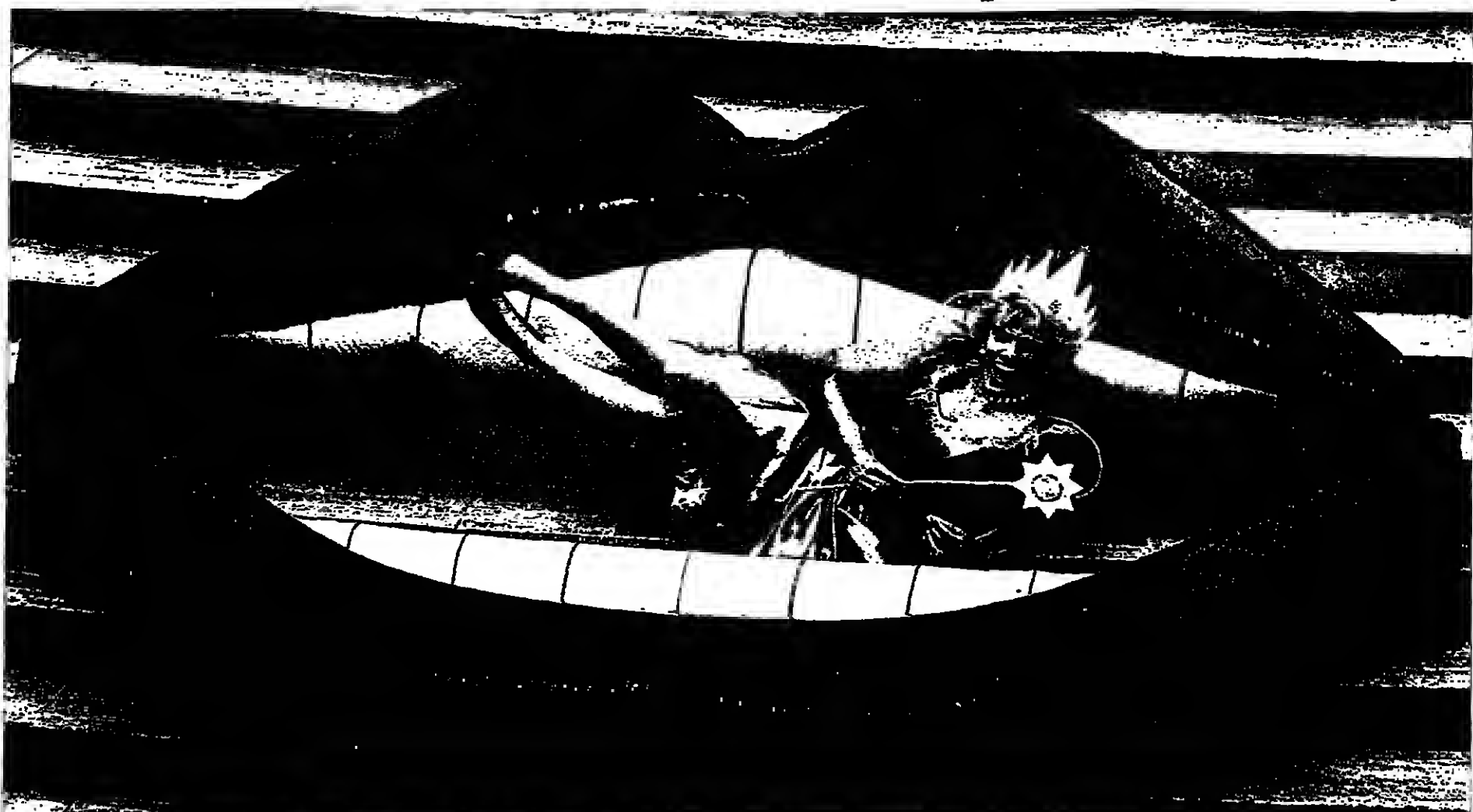
means accessible and populist television.

The *Report* came into being, Ms Rantzen said recently, because viewers were still "writing down their stories to see if I can help".

However, the three-episode series – the BBC was unable to say yesterday whether there are plans for more – has already attracted criticism.

After the first 30-minute show on ME, or "yuppie flu", the TV critic of the *London Evening Standard* wrote a vitriolic review and sent a copy of the episode to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission. A doctor who claimed the condition is treatable with anti-depressants said he had never encountered such "aggression and refusal to listen" from a studio audience.

Yet strengthened by a 30-year career in the media, Ms Rantzen is as well used to the brickbats as well as the bou-



Smile please: Esther Rantzen poses as a tooth fairy for a publicity stunt. As well as her television work, she campaigned for children's rights

Photograph: Steve Nicholson

quets, which include the Dimbleby Award from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA).

After working as a TV researcher, Ms Rantzen's first profile role was as a reporter for *Braden's Week* in 1968 where she stayed for four years before producing and presenting *That's Life* in 1973, the programme

which was to shape her career. There was a frivolous, trivial streak running through the show, typified by appalling jokes, unfunny monologues and dogs which were persuaded to say "sausages".

Most mindless of all were those dreadful I'm-a-woman-of-the-people street interviews in which she persuaded members

of the public to behave in peculiar ways.

However, despite its silly side, the show did capture the viewers' imagination as a TV David fighting against the corporate Goliaths. Ms Rantzen soon emerged as one of the first high-profile champions of people's rights, one of the early gurus of consumerism.

One of her achievements was to highlight the issue of children and organ transplants through the life of Ben Hardwick. She recently complained that no one would take up such issues now. "If Debbie Hardwick rang up today because her little boy, Ben, was dying of liver disease, what programme would put it on?" she asked.

Other programmes followed, including *Childwatch* and *Drugwatch*, as well as lighter shows, such as *The Big Time*.

In time she became part of the consumer Establishment, becoming a member of the National Consumer Council and the Health Education Authority. In 1991, Ms Rantzen, married to former BBC executive

Desmond Wilson, was awarded the OBE for services to journalism.

However, she says the "most important" part of her career was founding Childline, a free counselling service for children in distress. In 1987, which, despite occasional financial difficulties, has brought comfort to thousands of children.

## Exclusive: Why I'm proud to be a tabloid journalist

By ESTHER RANTZEN



Esther Rantzen: Used to provoking strong reactions

I am used to provoking strong reactions – some hostile, some affectionate. However, the attack on me in the *Sunday Telegraph* was unprecedented in my experience because, unlike the subject of any investigation I have ever mounted, I was given absolutely no advance warning before it was printed. I had no chance whatsoever to reply to the charges.

I was accused of twisting facts, of perverting truth, of sloppy journalism. They were very serious charges. Indeed, it was an extremely damaging attack. And the accusations came not from a critic, under the heading of a television review. They were written by a professional colleague in the BBC, Panorama reporter John Ware.

Why is this significant? Because both Mr Ware and I in our television journalism must follow a code of practice established by the Director General of the BBC. They are the "Producer Guidelines". One crucial element in them, to ensure both accuracy and fairness, is the principle that anyone who is the subject of criticism must be contacted before the programme, and given enough time to provide a proper reply. I have been described, by Mr Ware and others, as a tabloid

journalist. If this means I make populist, accessible, programmes, it is a label I am proud to wear. I have made mistakes – alas – but what journalist has not. But I have never perverted the truth, nor have I twisted the facts. "Tabloid" does not mean unethical. Indeed, because these programmes have such a high profile and attract such large audiences, the journalism must be especially rigorous and thorough. That is why yesterday's accusations shocked and hurt me, especially coming from such a source.

Mr Ware is a distinguished reporter. But I too have been honoured – with the Dimbleby Award from the British Academy of Film and Television

Arts, and the Special Judge's Award for Journalism from the Royal Television Society. These awards have been gained during my 30 years of working on "tabloid" popular factual programmes, some of which have exposed difficult and sensitive subjects such as child abuse, mental illness, the ethics of transplantation. In the light of the attack made against me, let me lay out the methods and principles guiding that work.

Programmes such as *That's Life* and the *Rantzen Report* obtain their material from viewers' letters. They gain their strength and validity from detailed and exhaustive research by the production team. The first part of any investigation consists of a thorough examination of the viewer's story – how well-founded is the complaint? Could it be a misunderstanding, or a simple and excusable mistake, or simply one person's grudge? In which case there is no story, no programme, the investigation ceases at this point. It would clearly be unfair to pursue it.

If, however, there appears to be good factual grounds for the complaints, we then look further and wider – which of course entails considerably more research. Are there others in the same predicament? What view do experts take – do they support or destroy the strength of the original case as carefully as possible, we then contact the other side. Is there a reasonable explanation they can offer? If so, do we drop the story even at this very late stage? Very often the answer is, yes we drop it, no matter how much time and energy has already been expended on the investigation. To broadcast would clearly be unfair. In other cases we broadcast, including the other side's response, and leaving our audience to decide the merits of the case. If the other side refuse to put their point of

view, we are left with no choice but to broadcast, with the information that we had requested a response, but been denied one.

Every programme Mr Ware attacks went through this process. Everyone was invited to appear in the studio to state their case. Everything they told us was taken into account in preparing the story.

When they refused to appear, but made a statement, we reported it. They knew the nature of the programme, and the purpose of it. We followed the BBC's guidelines for fairness and balance to the letter, not just because we have to, but because they are right, they are good practice and they protect the journalists and the journalists broadcasting on the BBC. The BBC's reputation is always at stake – so, it seems, mine. I am, as I have said, well accustomed to being attacked. But in being attacked without being given any chance at all to defend myself, my production team, the participants in the programme, or the programme itself seems to me a perversion of the truth, a twisting of the facts. Finally, if we do in spite of all our precautions, make a mistake, we publish a correction, and put the story straight.

## Newsman with a missionary's zeal

MICHAEL STREETER

If Esther Rantzen's journalism has always worked side-by-side with the entertainment business, her protagonist John Ware has worked mostly in the more rarefied atmosphere of TV current affairs documentaries.

A reporter with BBC1's flagship *Panorama* for ten years, he has a reputation as a tough, uncompromising journalist with a

missionary's zeal to get to the truth on hard issues.

It was at Granada's *World in Action* 13 years ago that Ware won the first of his two Royal Television Society (RTS) home current news awards, for a devastating profile of Gerry Adams. The portrait of the Sinn Féin activist as a determined terrorist, plotting violence in Northern Ireland and on the mainland was a shock-

ing one, and one which the IRA blamed for an attempt on Adams' life.

Ware's interest in Ireland was first excited on a brief visit as a reporter in Belfast with *The Sun* newspaper before his move to television, and for many years it was his main interest. He received acclaim for a *Panorama* programme called "Dirty War", detailing the close links between British army intelli-

gence and loyalist paramilitaries in the Province.

His second RTS award was for a report into the hard-left anti-racist "witch-hunts" on the then Labour-controlled Brent Council in North London. He also helped uncover the Westminster gerrymandering voting scandal.

Four years ago he took over as the presenter of BBC's *Rough Justice*.

**Edinburgh international television festival:** Squabbles among senior journalists bring forum to life and threaten bid for higher licence fee

## Former BBC executives slam 'bloated' institution

MATHEW HORSMAN  
Media Editor

Edinburgh international television festival was enlivened yesterday by family squabbles within the ranks of senior BBC journalists, including Kate Aldie, John Ware and Esther Rantzen.

Three former BBC executives added to the BBC's woes when they made swinging attacks on an institution which they said they remained blighted and inefficient.

Nick Elliott, now at the ITV network, centre, and Michael Atwell and Tim Gardam, now both at Channel 5, were taking part in a session entitled *The BBC Left*. Mr Atwell spoke of the idiosyncratic style of Alan Yentob and Michael Jackson, now both senior executives in John Birt's newly-restructured BBC. The comments came at a delicate time, as the BBC has just launched a campaign to increase the licence fee.

BBC insiders were insisting last night that the corporation would continue to make further cuts and that the higher licence fee was still warranted to ensure quality programming in the digital age.

terday focusing on the media's coverage of the Dunblane tragedy, Colin Cameron, head of television at BBC Scotland, suggested that Ms Aldie's tone during her reporting had been inappropriate and forensic, and that in retrospect it had been part of what the BBC had done wrong. The comment was seized upon as a further sign of tensions between BBC Scotland and head office in London, and compounded the sense of internecine strife within the corporation suggested by the bitter attack on Ms Rantzen by her BBC colleague, John Ware.

The debate about quality journalism was seen as crucial, in light of John Birt's call on Friday for a higher licence fee to finance the BBC's transition to the digital age.

"If we are to ask for more money, we had better be sure we produce the kind of news and current affairs programming the licence fee-payer deserves," said one BBC news producer.

The issue was picked up again during the festival's well-attended session on spin doctors featuring Donald Dewar, the Labour whip, and Liberal Democrat Charles Kennedy.

The panel, which also included senior journalists Michael Brunson of ITN and Mark Damazer of the BBC, agreed that the role of spin doctors created huge difficulties for the press, particularly in the lead-up to elections.

Journalists, including some from the floor, complained that senior ministers would too often decline to appear on major news programmes when they were likely to face hard questioning.

But Mr Dewar defended the right of individual politicians and political parties generally to stay away from journalists: "There are different interests on both sides, and we are each entitled to defend those interests."

There was also major concern among journalists that spin doctors too often attempted to interfere with the editorial process, by ringing incessantly to insist on changing the running order of news or to argue about the interpretation journalists had put on a story.

Phil Harding, head of the BBC's political unit, said: "If there are attempts at intimidation, they will be resisted." He added: "Politicians believe there is bias, but the public appears to believe there is far less bias, than it is to the public, to the

electorate, that we are ultimately responsible."

Preoccupations with "fresh influences" on television dominated the festival, with sessions dedicated to such issues as Dunblane and the growing dominance of BSkyB, the pay television company owned 40% by Rupert Murdoch, in the multi-channel market.

Christine Mitchell, head of programming at General Cable, accused BSkyB of having "a foot against our throats" through its dominant position as programme supplier to cable and its policy of "bundling" channels.



Tests of endurance: John Birt went on and on, and Laurence Marks went out, apparently. David Elstein charmed

## Memories of the night with Birt

Plenty of column centimetres were dedicated to John Birt's keynote address at the festival, when he launched his campaign for a higher licence fee. Hacks, mercifully, were given succinct briefings beforehand, saving themselves the trouble of wading through a long and rambling speech to find the kernel of something truly new. Some disgruntled attendees were less than charitable as they left McEwan Hall, muttering about the hard seats and the interminable Mr Birt. Memorably, Andrea Worrall, joint head of production at Granada, announced the next day: "Sure, I've slept with John Birt – during his speech last night."

David Elstein, the acceptable face of Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB, found himself in enemy territory, surrounded by operators who don't like BSkyB's stranglehold on the pay television market. He performed suavely and convincingly as always, and even made a few friends by confiding that his boss, the gruff Sam Chisholm, likes to spend bank holidays in New York, so he doesn't have to face all those empty roads – a painful reminder for a workaholic that he is the only one on his way to work.

The cable industry had a session of its own but only one cable operator agreed to take a place on the panel. Officially the companies said the time was

not ripe to air their views. Insiders suggested the real reason was fear of being shown up by Elstein, one of the British crude men in British television.

Can it be true that Laurence Marks, half of the team which wrote such hits as *Birds of a Feather*, was bounced out of his suite at the George Hotel to make way for John Birt? The BBC won't say, Mr Marks was unreachable and the staff are keeping mum.

Richard Tail, head of news at ITN, had to field plenty of questions at a session on "spin doctors", following the fawning interview of John Major by News at Ten's Trevor MacDon-

Mathew Horsman



## news

# RUC succession hit by crisis of confidence

DAVID MCKITTRICK  
Ireland Correspondent

A reformer, a traditionalist and an outsider are bidding to inherit force hit by Orange stand-off

The new Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, who is to be appointed at the end of this week from a shortlist of three, will inherit a force which is facing a policing crisis.

The stand-off during the Drumcree Orange march last month has severely dented public confidence in the RUC, among Protestants and particularly among Catholics. The Northern Ireland Police Authority, which is to make the new appointment, has acknowledged that Drumcree "has seriously damaged the credibility of the force".

The new man will take over from Sir Hugh Annesley, the Dublin-born police officer who came to the RUC from the Metropolitan Police and who has held the post for seven years.

The new appointee will face the formidable task of rebuilding the RUC's relations with

both Catholics and with large sections of the Protestant community. Nationalist confidence in the force is at its lowest point for many years, while last month 150 officers left home, most temporarily, following intimidation problems with loyalists.

The three officers to be interviewed this week include the RUC's two deputy chief constables, Ronnie Flanagan and Blair Wallace, together with William Taylor, who is presently commissioner of the City of London police. The new man will take over when Sir Hugh retires in November.

Mr Flanagan is one of Ulster's best-known policemen, with a profile so high that in recent years it has virtually eclipsed that of Sir Hugh. Universally regarded as the best communicator the RUC has ever produced, he has developed into the force's foremost



Ronnie Flanagan (left) and William Taylor (centre), two shortlisted candidates, and Ian Oliver, who was rejected

voice on radio and television. He is also viewed as a most political policeman - not in the sense of holding strong opinions, but in moving easily and comfortably in political as

well as media circles. He has won a number of public compliments from nationalist figures more accustomed to criticising the RUC than commending it. Aged 46, his 26-year career

in the RUC has included spells in charge of the Belfast area and Special Branch. A graduate, he is studying for a master's degree and has lectured at Brunel Hill police college. He was in charge

of the fundamental review of policing requirements which was launched during the IRA ceasefire.

Until very recently he was not favourite for the top post, but

some believe the Drumcree Orange march crisis, in which he was closely involved, may have harmed his prospects.

Mr Flanagan's image as a thoroughly modern policeman is in contrast to the reputation of his local competitor, Blair Wallace, who with 41 years of RUC service, is viewed as an officer of the old school. Aged 59 and currently in charge of support services and administration, he has kept a much lower profile and is not nearly so well known to the general public.

One rumour has it that Mr Wallace might be given the post, then relinquish it in a few years in favour of Mr Flanagan. The choice is made by members of the Police Authority, a government-appointed quango, subject to the approval of Sir Patrick Mayhew, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The outside candidate is

William Taylor, who since 1994 has been commissioner of the City of London police. Although the force is small it has assumed a pivotal importance since London's financial district became the IRA's prime terrorist target in Britain.

He has thus worked in close liaison with the RUC and with MI5. Mr Taylor, who is 49, has also served in the Thames Valley and Metropolitan police.

Most nationalists would tend to favour Mr Flanagan for the post, on the grounds that he is likely to be more open to changes and reforms in the force. By contrast many Unionists would prefer Mr Wallace.

One candidate who was unexpectedly excluded was Ian Oliver, head of Crumlin police, who is regarded as one of Britain's most intellectual police officers. Dr Oliver, who has protested to Sir Patrick, was apparently left off the shortlist because he has not completed a senior command course.

## Stores urged to block video of operations

CLARE GARNER

The Video Standards Council is urging stores not to stock a video released today which features close-up footage of more than 20 operations in NHS hospitals, including open-heart surgery, intimate gynaecological surgery and penile and breast implants.

The council is investigating complaints made by the Patients Association that the £12.99 tape, *Everyday Operations*, which shows excerpts from surgeons' training videos, exploited the sick. Although the advisory body does not have the power to ban the video, it can influence large shops' stocking policies. The council's discussions with retailers so far have revealed a widespread reluctance to sell the film.

Guy Howland, a spokesman for the Patients Association, called for the video's immediate withdrawal, saying the use of the film for commercial purposes went beyond the original scope of the agreement between patient and film-maker. "A number of patients have come into hospital and they have consented to have an operation undertaken upon them," he said. "As part of that they may also have agreed it could be used in the training of surgeons. What they have not agreed to, and it seems quite outrageous to me, is that this material has been used for a home video."

The council believes that the people who are unwittingly featured in the compilation have a case against the producers. "There is a good chance that provisions of the Copyright Act have been prima facie breached," a spokesman said.

The video has a warning triangle and an 18 British Board of Film Classification rating. The cover says, "This video contains scenes you may find disturbing" and "over twenty brilliantly performed operations are vividly revealed".

The British Medical Association branded the video "deeply distasteful" and said it feared the film might frighten patients out of taking part in future training videos or even of coming forward for surgery at all.

David Donoghue, a spokesman for the video's makers, IMC Video, defended the 50-minute film, claiming it was "serious" and "educational". The company, previously involved in the controversial video *Caught in the Act*, featuring footage from closed circuit television cameras, and *Executions*, showing executions, had gained the patients' permission to be filmed, he insisted.

"What we have done is open up something increasingly used by professionals for training and said, 'You the public, you the patients and potential patients and you who fund the NHS through your taxes, can now actually see what happens in hospitals,'" he said. Mr Donoghue denied that the video would attract those seeking voyeuristic excitement.

Dr Vivian Nathanson, head of the British Medical Association's ethics committee, urged the public not to watch the video. "We have no problem with people making money from educational material but to make money from frightening people and perhaps stopping them from seeking treatment that may help them is clearly distasteful," he said.



Three men in three boats: The coraclemen of Cilgerran, (from left) Rod Bowen, Bob Bird and Max Bowen, in west Wales, go through their paces before the weekend's annual coracle races on the River Teifi, against their counterparts in Carmarthen. Photograph: Rob Stratton

## Health service perceived as men in suits

NICHOLAS TIMMINS  
Public Policy Editor

What is your picture of the perfect health authority? According to users and employees of Buckinghamshire Health Authority it is one that reads the *Independent*.

In market research to find out local people's perceptions of the newly formed authority, health

professionals - from GPs to line managers - and NHS users were asked to describe and illustrate their existing view of the authority - and explain how they would like it to be.

The view of the existing authority produced images of pound signs, rows of people waiting, and NHS staff who appeared unhappy. When asked to choose photographs illus-

trating the authority, black and white pictures of barbed wire, mud, misery and of a rope stretched to breaking point were chosen. Julie Wells, the authority's director of communications reports in this week's *Health Service Journal*.

Asked to depict how they would like the authority to be, the staff and focus groups chose warm colours, smiling faces

and pictures of health and vitality. But the sting in the tail, according to Ms Wells, was when they were asked to depict the authority as a person, defining in addition the newspaper it would read.

The present authority was seen as male, mid-40s, balding and grey-suited, full of qualifications but lacking common sense, who read the *Financial Times*.

Nicholas Timmins, who is mid-40s, but blue-suited and hirsute, is leaving the *Independent* to join the *Financial Times*. He hopes he is not lacking in common sense.

Times or the *Daily Telegraph*. The ideal was female, aged about 35, caring, confident, able, inspirational and energetic - and an *Independent* reader. Which miffed the authority, given that all but one of its seven senior executives are women. The research, however, has told the executive how it wants to be seen - as a strategic leader. And tomorrow it will be buying the *Independent*.

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# Students take vocational route to university

FRAN ABRAMS  
Education Correspondent

Students with vocational A-levels are finding it easier to get into university than those with the traditional, academic qualifications, ministers are to announce this week.

More than nine out of 10 students applying to higher-education courses with General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) this year have won a place, Gillian Shephard will disclose on Wednesday. Less than three-quarters of A-level students are successful.

The numbers going to university with vocational A-levels, introduced in 1992, are likely to double this year, new figures show. While 10,000 applied last year and 89 per cent were successful, this year 20,000 have applied and 92 per cent are expected to be successful.

Figures from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (Ucas) will also show that a greater proportion of young people are taking an advanced GNVQ, which is equivalent to two A-levels, alongside one traditional A-level.

However, there are still concerns about the quality of the GNVQ exams in business studies, health and social care, leisure and tourism, science and manufacturing. Of 75,000 students who registered for the

courses in 1994, 55,000 have not applied for university places this year, suggesting that many have failed to complete their courses within two years.

Last year it was disclosed that almost two-thirds of the 42,000 students who started courses in 1992 and 1993 had not yet gained the full qualifications.

However, some critics of the exams now believe that the latest signs are optimistic. Alan Smithers, professor of public policy at Brunel University, said there now seemed to be a welcome increase in job-related degree courses.

English universities had always been good at teaching thinking skills, and Britain had produced Nobel prize-winners, novelists and poets as a result, he said.

But Britain had always been outshone by its economic rivals when it came to applied skills, and many British inventions had been commercially exploited abroad as a result.

"While we are very good at finding out things about the world we are not very good at applying that information and exploiting wealth. But we have recognised the problem and the will is there to change it," he said.

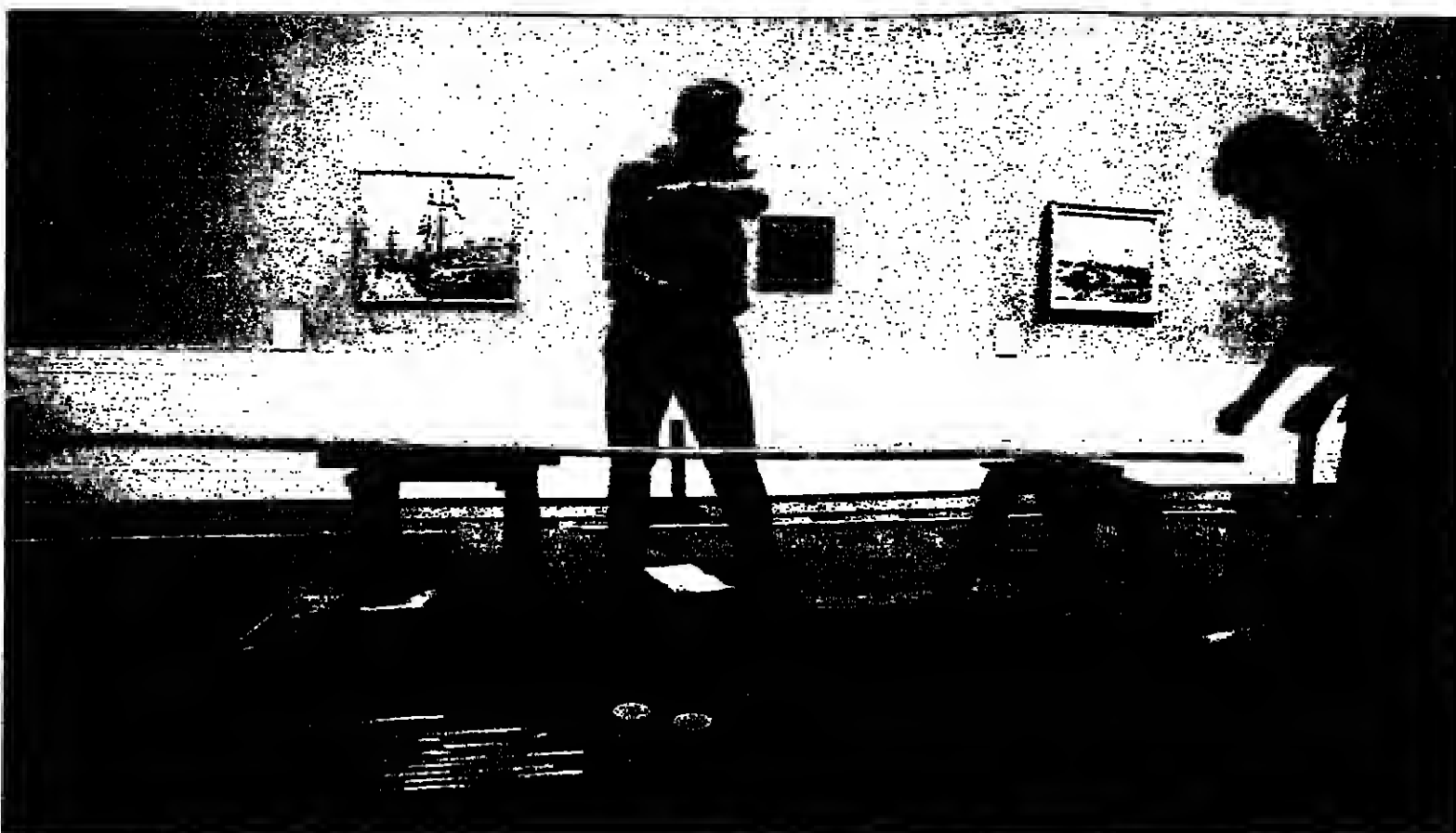
Nine out of 10 GNVQ students who go on to higher education go to new universities, but one old university in 10 is

now prepared to consider taking them.

Vocational A-levels have been criticised for being time-consuming and unreliable, with many teachers lacking the skills and confidence to teach them properly.

Two years ago ministers announced plans to reform them, but earlier this year the schools inspection body, Ofsted, found that they were still often marked inconsistently and that much of teachers' training was irrelevant to them.

Right-wingers have argued for years that the exams, which are both set and marked by teachers, are bound to lead to problems.



Sea view: An exhibition of paintings of the coastline of northern France being prepared at Graves gallery, Sheffield. Photograph: Asadour Guzelian

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NY BEVINS  
Editor

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## Prince may sue over photos with Camilla

MICHAEL STREETER

The Prince of Wales is considering legal action over the publication of photographs of him and Camilla Parker-Bowles enjoying a weekend together at a friend's country retreat, Buckingham Palace said yesterday.

A spokeswoman for the Palace said all options were being considered over the pictures in the *News of the World*, adding: "We are ruling nothing out."

The publication of the photographs of the Prince again raised the question of media intrusion. A week ago the Palace warned four photographers to stay away from the Royal Family's holiday retreat at Balmoral.

The spokeswoman dismissed reports that the paper had been tipped off by a royal source to set up a favourable photo opportunity as "ridiculous". The *News of the World* in turn was said to have played up the "tip-off" line to deflect accusations of invasion of privacy.

For seasoned royal watchers the timing of the photographs' publication, a few days before the Prince and Princess of Wales's divorce, is not a coincidence.

According to the *News of the World*, a "well-spoken" woman contacted it to say that the

Prince and Mrs Parker-Bowles would be spending the weekend before last at Glyn Celyn House in Powys, south Wales, home of Mrs Parker-Bowles's former brother-in-law Nic Paravacini and his second wife. His first wife, Mary Ann, is Mrs Parker-Bowles's sister.

The fuzzy photographs show the Prince and Mr Paravacini strolling together, with Mrs Parker-Bowles and Sukie Paravacini some paces behind.

Phil Hall, the paper's editor, said: "The information that led us to secure these pictures is surrounded by intrigue."

The theory in royal-watching circles is that attempts are being made to stage-manage public knowledge of the friendship between the Prince and Mrs Parker-Bowles, so that one day they can appear together openly. Many feel that it is too early for a public demonstration of a relationship which effectively doomed the Prince's marriage from the start.

Another theory is that someone in the Princess's camp tipped off the newspaper, to show the Prince as "treacherous" to be seen with Mrs Parker-Bowles just before the divorce.

Most likely however is that the house was simply watched by a photographer.

# "Still thinking as a step up"

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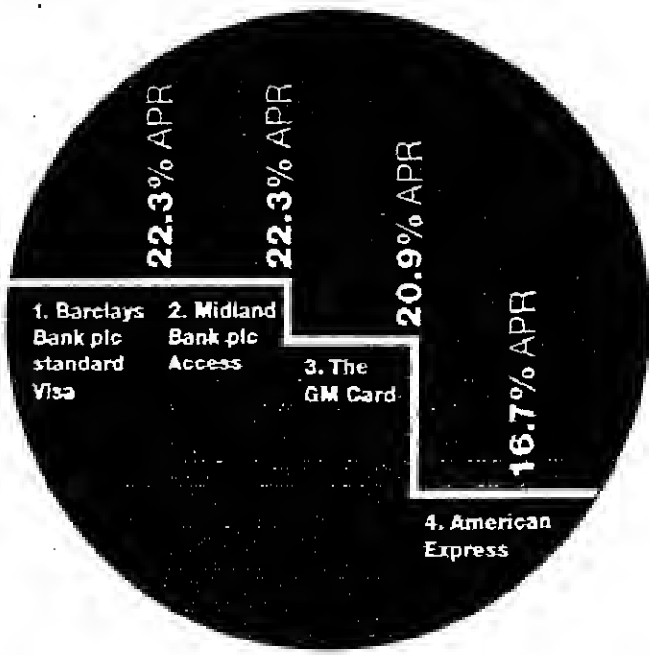
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## DAILY POEM

### Paysage Triste

By TS Eliot

The girl who mounted in the omnibus  
The rainy day, and paid a penny fare  
Who answered my appreciative stare  
With that averted look without surprise  
Which only the experienced can wear  
A girl with reddish hair and faint blue eyes

An almost denizen of Leicester Square,  
She could not have had her in the box with us  
She would not have known how to sit, or what to wear  
Yet if I close my eyes I see her moving  
With loosened hair about her chamber  
With naked feet passing across the skies

She would have been most crudely ill at ease  
She would not have known how to sit, or what to wear  
Nor when the lights went out and the horn began  
Have leaped as you did, your elbow on my knees  
To prod impetuously with your fan  
The smiling stripling with the pink soaped face  
Who had your opera-glasses in his care.

In 1909 TS Eliot bought a 25 cent leather-bound notebook while he was on holiday on the New England coast. Over the next eight years he filled it with 50 or so poems, never published, which passed to his benefactor John Quinn, and in 1958 to the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library. These make up *Inventions of the March Hare: Poems 1909-1917*, edited and richly annotated by Christopher Ricks. The notes, which occupy half the book, supply line by line insight into Eliot's vast literary memory, this poem alone complete with 18 references, amongst them to Browning, Wyatt, Verlaine, Milton, Keats, Edwin Arnold - and a charming letter to Virginia Woolf about going to the opera.

*Inventions of the March Hare* by TS Eliot is published by Faber at £30 on 9 September. Copyright: Valerie Eliot, 1996.

## news

Language revival: Strike threat by poets is only part of renewed interest which nationalists hope will protect oral tradition

# Welsh speak up for their ancient tongue

TONY HEATH

Poets are threatening to "strike" over it, footballers are going to night school to learn it and doctors may soon be asked to sit a proficiency test in it: the revival of interest in the Welsh language is gathering pace.

When tension in Bosnia was close to breaking point the Royal Welsh Fusiliers communicated in Welsh over the radio, thwarting eavesdroppers from the warring factions.

Around the same time, learner drivers in Wales were allowed to display "D" plates. (D for Dysgwyr - Welsh for learner) ending a minor skirmish in the battle to sustain a language spoken by nearly one in five of Wales' 2.6 million people.

Bards, the Welsh poets regarded as the language's guardians, are threatening to boycott the successful BBC Radio Cymru station because they claim the language of broadcasters is going downmarket. The British Medical Association

**'Children are being used as the poor bloody infantry in an unwinnable battle'**

is miffed at the proposal by a leading health service manager, Dr Carl Clowes, for a proficiency test. The doctors body says that it is hard enough to recruit GPs without imposing a linguistic requirement.

For some Welsh is an important rung on the career ladder - nowhere more so than in the burgeoning media industry. Over 4,000 work in the 100-odd independent television production companies; fewer than 600 work in Welsh coal mines.

Mark Aizkwood the Welsh footballer capped 48 times, Nigel Walker, the black Cardiff XV winger and Ron Davies, Labour's spokesman for Wales, are among those who have taken the plunge.

For decades the language declined. In 1931 the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys recorded 909,000 speakers. Today at around 500,000 the situation is stabilising and there are even hopes of an upturn.

For the past 15 years the Government has identified the language as a suitable case for treatment. The militant Welsh Language Society rocked the early Thatcher years. The threat by the veteran nationalist Gwynfor Evans to starve himself unless the Government established a Welsh language television service forced. Today Sianel Pedwar Cymru (S4C) flourishes, with an annual subsidy of £63m. The Welsh Language Board, charged with sustaining the ancient tongue, collects £2m a year from the Welsh Office. Dubbed "the quango for the lingo" its chairman is the nationalist peer Lord Elis-Thomas, once a left-wing Plaid Cymru MP.

Other government cash supports the eisteddfod, Welsh language publishing and Welsh education to the tune of £10m a year. The language is a national curriculum subject, a cause of concern at schools along the Welsh side of Offa's Dyke which draw some pupils from England.

With the exception of John Redwood, who refused to sign official letters drafted in Welsh, successive Tory Welsh secretaries have handled the language question with a sensitivity that contrasts sharply with the approach to problems such as Wales' low-wage economy and the deprivations of the old mining valleys. As a bonus the government has kept the lid on nationalist protests to an extent not seen in Scotland where language is barely an issue.

Controversy, a staple of Welsh life, continues. Lord Elis-Thomas says the language is no longer a political issue. But he adds: "We see evidence of a lack of confidence with regard to the future security of the language and in the extent to which people use Welsh - especially as regards reading, writing, and dealing with officialdom."

Dr Tim Williams an academic whose PhD on the decline of the language caused a furore a few years ago. He warned about being "misled by the statistics. Children are being used as the poor bloody infantry in an unwinnable battle".

As fluent a Welsh speaker as any Bard Dr Williams' military analogy comes over *en clair* just as the fusiliers' messages did in Bosnia. Language is all about communication.



When in Wales: Isabel Jordan, community development officer, talks with a Welsh-speaking neighbour, Ann Jones, at Farm Bryn-y-coed, mid-Wales. Photograph: Rob Stratton

## Where being bilingual helps keep villages alive

When Isabel Jordan joined the Brecon Beacons National Park as community development officer a year ago, she spoke no Welsh, writes Tony Heath. Today her fluency in the language enables her to cope happily as she visits villagers in an area where Welsh is the usual means of communication.

The park's management encourages staff to learn the language and to attend evening classes and intensive weekend instruction. Mrs Jordan said: "The time spent learning Welsh is invaluable." Her job entails liaising with communities, spread around 519 square miles of mid-Wales,

to improve their quality of life. Only 30,000 people live in the park - 8,000 in Brecon, the "capital" of the Beacons. Community groups, including Women's Institutes, young farmers' clubs and parent-teacher associations, as well as 30 statutory community councils, call on Mrs Jordan's ex-

pertise. "We help to refurbish village halls, raise funds for community events and help to get environment projects up and running," Mrs Jordan said. "We also help to keep communities alive and help them grow."

When Mrs Jordan first came to the park, she found that many villagers did not speak English. However, negotiations often proceed more smoothly in Welsh. This proved to be the case in Myddel, a village at the foot of the park.

was successful and it boosted my confidence," she said. The daughter of a diplomat, her father Kenneth East was British Ambassador to Iceland. Her move to Wales brought the opportunity and challenge of becoming bilingual. Learning Welsh has, she said, proved a plus at work and play.

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## Archbishop calls for halt to 'DIY morality'

Britain was suffering from the consequences of a "privatised, DIY morality", the Archbishop of Canterbury said yesterday.

Dr George Carey said sometimes in modern Britain the only thing that could not be tolerated was to say that something was wrong.

He made his call for the re-establishment of moral guidelines to a congregation of about 20,000 at Britain's biggest Christian arts festival.

Dr Carey was speaking at the 23rd annual Greenbelt Festival, this year being staged near Corby, Northamptonshire. And his message was applauded enthusiastically by a gathering of mainly young people, dressed in T-shirts and jeans.

The Archbishop told the crowd that he had last attended the festival 17 or 18 years ago when he had camped out with his family.

He said at that time the main theme of the festival was radical Christianity, and that theme still continued.

Dr Carey said to be radical went to the roots of the Christian faith. And when he was a teenager, Christianity was mainly characterised by a series of "don'ts".

But he told the crowd that Britain was now going too far the other way and it was time for some traditional modern boundaries to be re-drawn.

"At present we live in a society where sometimes the only thing that cannot be tolerated is to say that something is wrong," said Dr Carey. "We have to say there are

moral standards, both personal and corporate."

He added: "Too often people are encouraged to think no further than their own private world..."

"We are now seeing the consequences of a privatised, DIY morality working itself out in many aspects of our society."

"This applies also to our Church. It is tempting to look no further than our own private world, to focus on maintenance rather than mission, to focus on survival rather than sacrifice."

Dr Carey said the Church still had much to learn from the scandal of the "Nine O'Clock services" in Sheffield last year (where rave music was used to attract young people, and the worship took on cult-like attributes). He added that churches had to be accountable.

The Archbishop also paid tribute to Christopher Gray, the vicar murdered in Liverpool recently.

"His story, I hope, will be an inspiration to many to a new commitment to radical Christianity," said Dr Carey.

The Archbishop's sermon was the highlight of the four-day festival, which is co-organised by Christian Aid.

The crowd sang modern hymns in reggae-style with the backing of a rock band, in what was billed as "the funkiest communion that you have ever experienced".

During the festival, which attracted mainly people aged between 18 and 25, crowds have been entertained by rock bands and a variety of religious speakers.

Celtic revival makes itself heard far and wide

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# Parties warned on GP funding

NICHOLAS TIMMINS  
Public Policy Editor

A warning to Labour not to scrap GP fundholding and to the Conservatives not to force it onto more family doctors has come from a key piece of research into the controversial scheme.

One of the first studies to compare fundholding with GP commissioning - where family doctors work with health authorities to buy health care - has shown that both have advantages, and the two approaches do different things well.

Fundholding, where the GPs directly control their own budget, appears better at achieving short-term efficiency gains, the work by the Loodoo School of Economics shows. But locality purchasing, as GP commissioning is sometimes known, also brings advantages.

And as more fundholders band together in multi-funds, or enter total purchasing projects, where they buy all health care, the differences between the two models are becoming "rather nominal", the study found.

The study, led by Professor Howard Glennerster, co-director of the LSE's Welfare State Programme, concludes: "Neither political party should force either fundholding or locality purchasing as a universal solution."

Instead, commissioning should be given the same level of administrative back-up as fundholding enjoys - something health ministers have generally refused to do - while Labour should drop its plans to scrap fundholding.

The biggest single change which fundholding has produced is to "move general prac-

tice in from the cold", Professor Glennerster and his colleagues say. In 1990, family doctors did not feel involved in mainstream NHS planning. Since then there has been "a sea change" as fundholding was introduced and as GPs who did not want to join that scheme banded together to form purchasing commissions. "The extent to which GPs of all kinds are now involved in local health planning is quite new," the study says. And that change "is more important than the differences between fundholders and ooo-fundholders".

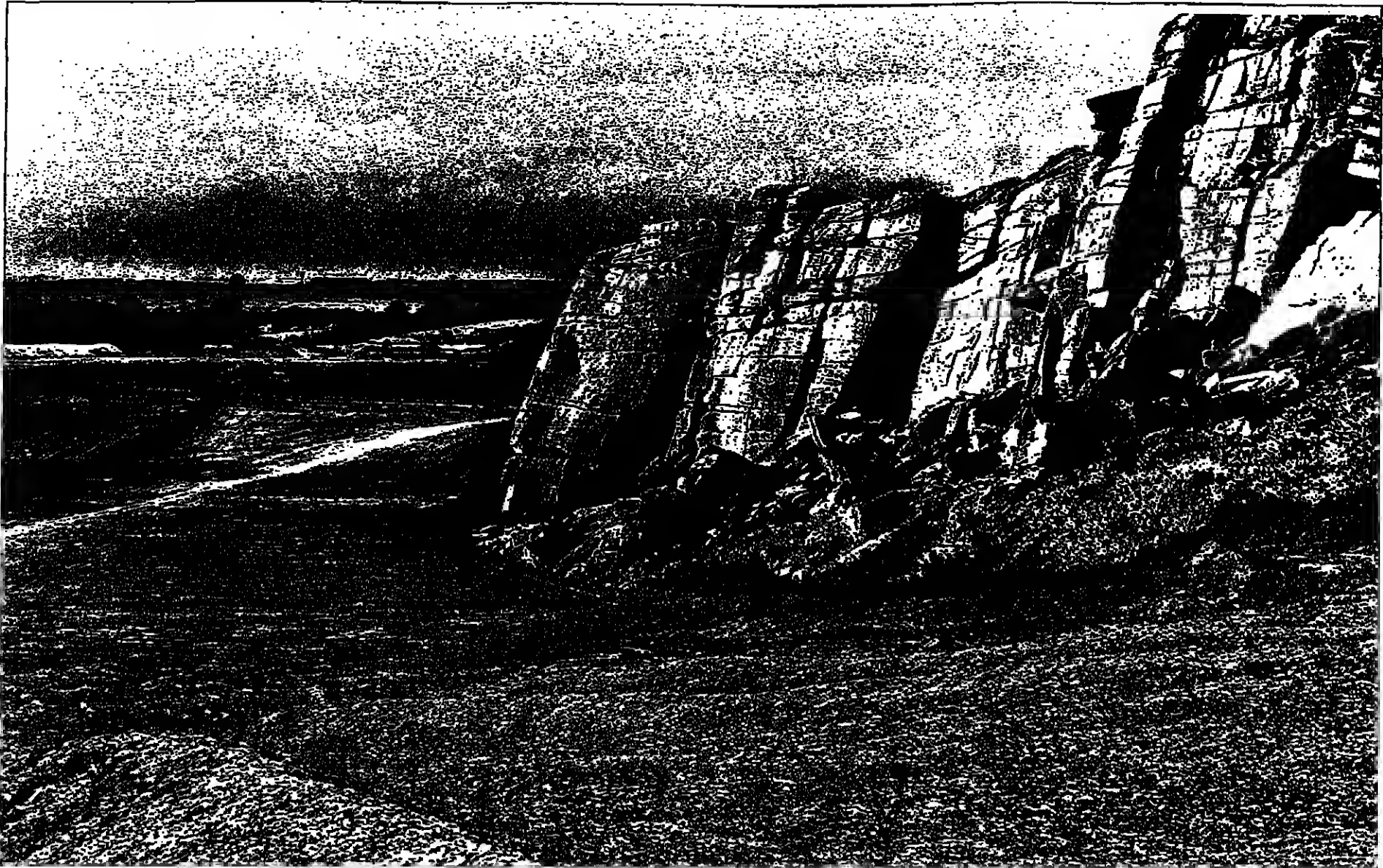
The research looked at how well family doctor groupings performed in six different health authorities. Overall the fundholders achieved greater changes. Those in GP commissioning groups, where the health authority still controls the budget, had greater frustrations - "an agent at one remove doing the purchasing on your behalf was less satisfactory for some GPs than acting directly".

But both achieved real gains for patients and "fundholders and locality groups do different things well". Commissioning groups were keener to see that all patients in the area gained from changes made, not just the patients of an individual practice.

"To push for universal fundholding or to seek to abolish it would seem unnecessarily destructive," the study says, "especially given our poor state of knowledge of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives."

Alternatives to Fundholding, LSE Welfare State Programme, Paper WSP/123

## Publisher seeks funds to bring rock-climbers' paradise South



Rock on: The disused chalk quarry at Pitstone, Hertfordshire, as it would look with part of Stanage Edge, the Peak District, cloned and grafted on to its side. Photomontage: Joe Jenkins

STEPHEN GOODWIN

An idea is germinating in the sometimes fevered minds of the climbing fraternity that the Millennium might be marked by providing its rock-starved southern England members with their very own crag.

Why should keen London climbers have to scorch on the motorway to the Peak District or beyond when the technology exists to graft 400 yards of gritstone edge on to the Chilterns or the North Downs?

The Pavlovian response of conservationists can be im-

ined, and there are a good many climbers who would balk at the artificiality of such a crag. But there is no doubt it would be heavily used. This weekend, hundreds of climbers will crowd on to the sandstone outcrops near Tunbridge Wells, the only natural climbing ground in the Home Counties, which is visibly eroding. Indoor climbing walls are also proliferating in London and the South-East.

But the Millennium Crag would have none of the managed security of an indoor wall. Like its natural equivalents in the Peak, the Lake District or

in North Wales, it would be used for "adventure climbing", where the consequences of a fall could be serious.

The crag is the brain-child of Keo Wilson, a publisher of mountaineering books and a full-volume advocate of the traditional approach to climbing. "The combination of a risky sport and a wonderful natural setting is a very heady mixture. But ... it's not something that youngsters coming to sport or climbing walls are getting," he said. Hence his idea

idea that a southern-based club or some of mountaineering's

"great and good" should apply for Lottery funding to build a crag on the north-west fringe of the M25.

The planned site - a disused chalk quarry at Pitstone, on the Chiltern escarpment near Tring, Hertfordshire, is owned by Castle Cement, which is awaiting the result of a public inquiry into their plan for a land-fill site. Local villagers have opposed the rubbish tip and say they would welcome a recreational use for the land.

The quarry could accommodate a range of rock features - buttresses, steep edges and

free-standing boulders. The highest feature would be up to 400 yards of slabs, copying the Idwal Slabs in North Wales, grafted on to the side of Pitstone Hill at the back of the quarry. Part of Stanage Edge, in the Peak District, could also be cloned.

Nothing on this scale has so far been attempted in Europe. The spray-on concrete fabrications, sculptured and textured like the "living" rock, would cost some £750,000 for 100 yards.

But the crag project may fail for the lack of a group willing to push for it; to formulate a bid

to the Millennium Commission or to the Sports Council and then raise a share of the money. The British Mountaineering Council (BMC) has offered support.

"The impetus needs to come from a club or some of climbing's statesmen in the Home Counties," said Derek Walker, a former president of the Climbers' Club and former BMC general secretary.

"It's a great idea. If people's only experience of the climbing is on indoor walls, it's totally false. This could give a taste of the real freedom of the sport."

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## international



Even more after the break: On Spanish television, football is a game of six nights

## Bar owners cry foul over football on TV

ELIZABETH NASH  
Madrid

A deal to be clinched this week allowing Spanish television to show football matches six nights a week – one more than last season – has thrown owners of bars and restaurants into a panic. They see football mania as the road to ruin.

When the season opens next Sunday, millions of Spaniards will stay at home, glued to their sets every night of the week except Friday, leaving city centres, bars and cinemas that would otherwise be vibrant deserted.

The television channels are delighted at the huge business brought in by soaring viewing fig-

ures, calculated at 28 per cent of gross domestic product. So are the football clubs, whose entire budgets are covered by the huge sums paid by television companies for broadcasting rights.

The deal is a carve-up between the private channel Antena Tres and the two state channels, who will show matches from the Spanish league and Europe, ensuring that the football sched-

ules do not clash. But the mighty National Association of Restaurants, Cafés and Bars fears its livelihood will suffer a "mortal blow" and threatens reprisals. The association's leader, Ignacio Cabello, warned that the deal will cost its members £850m a year in lost

trade and could cut jobs in the sector by 30 per cent.

His 800,000 members plan counter-measures, ranging from a boycott of products advertised during televised matches to all-out strikes. The addition of Monday, hitherto a football-free evening, will alone result in £300m being stripped from restaurants' takings, he said.

Mr Cabello even issued an appeal that could rend the fabric of that most precious Spanish institution, the family, by urging women to abandon their husbands on Saturday nights and venture out alone.

Following protests last year, the television companies agreed – grudgingly – to bring the Sat-

urday night broadcast forward by half an hour to 8.30pm, enabling fans to go out for dinner or a film after the match. But it made little difference to the slump in trade on what ought to be the week's busiest night out.

As it is, non-football fans in Madrid appreciate the opportunity to cruise the tapas bars in comfort, enjoy uncrowded cinemas and drive unhindered up the Gran Vía, which is usually immobilised by traffic. Old hands, however, know to move on before 11.30pm when the streets are jammed once more, taxis are unobtainable and bars are crammed.

The divisive effect within the family caused by televised foot-

ball became evident during the Euro 96 championship, when increasing numbers of households acquired a second set so that women could retreat to another room and watch soap operas, romantic Hollywood classics and a slew of the television equivalents of *Hole* magazine scheduled to compete with wall-to-wall football.

With a record nine broadcast games to be played each week in the coming season, these pressures will intensify. But the prospect of Spain's night spots being taken over by bands of single women out for a good time may prompt a profound transformation of national habits.

## Defeated Russians crawl out of Grozny

Triumphant rebels escort foes out of city, reports  
Carlotta Gall

A Russian jeep flying a white flag led a sorry convoy out of the centre of Grozny at noon yesterday. Four military lorries followed, each towing a broken down Russian armoured personnel carrier, bumping along on flat tyres. Chechen fighters, armed with Kalashnikovs, lined up grenades strapped to their chests, sat in the cab alongside the Russian soldiers who were driving.

It was the beginning of the withdrawal of Russian troops, 19 days after Chechen rebels seized control of the city in a devastating raid that left thousands of Russian troops surrounded and hundreds dead.

"The 101st Brigade was surrounded here," said Khunkar Pasha Israpilov, a young Chechen commander whose men now control the area.

"In principle they could not leave, they had no way out. Now I have an order to let them go back to their base in Khankala," he said.

Beside him stood a Russian Lieutenant-Colonel, Igor Rudnevov. "This is the first stage in play," he said. "I think our commanders understand the situation, there is already an agreement and we have mutual trust."

The two sides started talking four days ago, Mr Israpilov said, as Russia's national security adviser, Alexander Lebed, and the Chechen chief of staff, Aslan Maskhadov, secured a ceasefire agreement.

On Saturday the Chechens accompanied a Russian convoy, bringing water, food and medicine to Russian posts, and evacuated the wounded. The Russian soldiers drove through



Face to face: Chechen rebels (right) line up opposite Russian soldiers during a common inspection in the village of Stary Ataghi

Photography

the market, stony faced. The Chechens sitting beside them were shouting to their friends, raising their fists in the air.

The Russians were pulling out of their posts gathering into larger headquarters. Over the next few days they would leave the city for two large Russian bases just outside Grozny, Mr Israpilov said.

Lieutenant-Colonel Rudnevov said: "We have been ordered to let them go, with their armour and weapons. We do not need their armoured personnel carriers or their Kalashnikovs. Lebed said it can be over and done with in 10 days."

Asked if he felt the Russian withdrawal meant a defeat, the Russian colonel said: "No one won, there were losses on both sides. You cannot talk of losing or winning, we came to an agreement."

But while the Russian troops were gathering to leave, the Chechen fighters were settled in among the ruins of the city in freshly dug trenches.

There was no ultimatum for the Chechen fighters to leave the city, Lieutenant-Colonel Rudnevov said. But Sultan Minayev, a Chechen commander accompanying the Russians, said: "Just those who are needed to guard the city will stay. The rest will go back to their bases."

Some 200 Russian servicemen remained in one of the nearby apartment blocks. The windows were bricked up, the ground floor rooms sandbagged. Two soldiers stood on a balcony watching the Chechen fighters milling in the streets below.

It was the first time armed Chechen fighters were back in numbers at the Minutka roundabout since Russian forces pushed them out in February last year in a bloody battle that

cost an estimated 28,000 thousand civilian lives and thousands of Russian casualties.

Dead bodies of Russian soldiers still lay in the streets yesterday from the latest fighting. One blackened corpse was sprawled on the kerb, yards from his burned out truck.

In the city centre Chechen fighters had taken over a key Russian post. A Chechen jeep, flying the green flag of independence, raced past a Russian post on the central bridge.

Towards Government House, which Chechen fighters still gave a wide berth, Russian soldiers were moving in the rubble. Chechen fighters sat 100 yards away. Together they had gathered 22 bodies of Russian soldiers on Saturday morning. The Russian troops, mostly conscripts, appeared exhausted. The bodies were men from their unit. They had fled into a nearby building and held out for days, unaware that another Russian unit was across the street. A Russian officer, finishing a conversation with his Chechen counterpart, said simply: "They want to come in and we want to go."

## Lebed peace drive hit by snags

PHIL REEVES  
Moscow

Peace talks in Chechnya were interrupted yesterday after Alexander Lebed, the envoy of Boris Yeltsin, cancelled a meeting with rebel leaders and flew back to Moscow, saying he wanted the President's personal approval for proposals about the republic's status.

No sooner had he boarded the aircraft than his mission hit fresh difficulties when the commander of Russian forces in the war zone called off a meeting with the Chechen chief of staff, Aslan Maskhadov. General Vyacheslav Tikhomirov refused to go to the talks because of an incident in Grozny on Saturday in which Chechen fighters intercepted a convoy of Interior Ministry troops and released them only after they had handed over their weapons, 50 in all.

The general, who last week gave his backing to a threat to launch an all-out assault on the

city, said the meeting was cancelled because the Chechens failed to respond to demands that the weapons be returned.

For the same reason, plans to withdraw Russian troops from Grozny were delayed yesterday, although federal forces began to leave parts of southern Chechnya. Two battalions reportedly left Shatoi and Vedeno, two flashpoints of the war.

By standards of the Chechen war, the Grozny incident was petty. The Chechens apologised, saying the fighters were renegades, who had been detained. The general's stance is certain to intensify suspicions that he is among those in top military ranks who strongly oppose Mr Lebed's mission to end the 20-month conflict, in which 35,000 have died. Mr Lebed, an old colleague of the general, frequently complains about a "third force" determined to prolong the war.

Last night the Chechens said they saw no setback in Mr

Lebed's return to Moscow, where he intends to see the views of Mr Yeltsin, the Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, and experts in international law over proposals for a new Chechnya.

Although details are unknown, both sides appear to favour elections in Chechnya and a referendum. Although the Russians are thought to be willing to allow some independence, including a separate judicial system, and security services, Moscow still regards complete autonomy as impossible. Yesterday Mr Chernomyrdin reinforced his view, saying Chechnya "must be within Russia", although its exact status would be decided at a later date. One sticking point is the Chechens' desire for their own army. Russia is willing to allow them to serve in their own forces in the republic, but it wants their military to come under the umbrella of the federation.



Lebed: Checking with Yeltsin

## Confusion surrounds Paris church eviction

MARY DEJEVSKY  
Paris

Two days after a controversial police operation to remove more than 200 illegal immigrants from a Paris church, President Jacques Chirac said it was "out of the question" for France to alter its immigration policy, which was one of "very great firmness". The laws could be "improved" but the policy would not change.

He was speaking after discussions with the Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, to prepare the new political term. While Mr Chirac seemed to express support for the decision to use force, the outcome of Friday's operation remained confused yesterday, with most of the immigrants released from detention and only four summarily deported. Leaders of the protest said they intended to re-assemble and would insist on collective negotiations with the authorities.

The main focus yesterday was on a court called into special session to consider the cases of 80 of the immigrants evicted from the church of St Bernard on Friday. Proceedings began two hours late after lawyers for the detainees said

they needed time to acquaint themselves with the files. Few of the immigrants turned up. More than 30 were freed on Saturday after a different court refused to extend detention from 24 hours to six days, saying the applications were faulty or unjustified. The Paris authorities are to appeal.

The detainees were not the only part of the operation to go awry from the authorities' point of view. On Saturday demonstrators blocked a main road near Evreux military airfield, where a plane was being prepared to repatriate several dozen illegal immigrants. When the plane left, it was delayed for six hours at its first port of call, Dakar, in Senegal, because staff refused to service it. Only four of those on board, all from Mali, were from the St Bernard group; the others were subject to earlier deportation orders.

If there were hitches on Saturday, events the previous night had elements of farce. Marchers responding to a call for a rally on Friday evening defied police and continued to the centre where most of the St Bernard group had been taken.

When they got near Vincennes, it was dark, and demonstrators could be seen on street

corners, consulting maps to find out where to go. Their route took them by the edge of the racetrack, where the evening's trotting was entering its last stages. Riot police, concealed in the trees, emerged and fired tear-gas, which frightened the horses, and threatened a mêlée of marchers, horses, racers and police.

About the same time, the first of the detainees, mostly women and all the children, were being released to ensure France met its obligations under international conventions not to keep children in custody overnight. Some of those released were deposited at outlying Métro stations, apparently the only addresses they had given on the form when they were registered.

Yesterday the tally of Friday's massive operation was: four men deported to Mali; no more than 16 people detained, 40 people given permission to remain in France and all other cases pending. The only emerging agreement, from lawyers, politicians and commentators alike, was that it was high time to clarify the immigration law to prevent similar situations in future. President Chirac's statement suggested that he would approve such a project.

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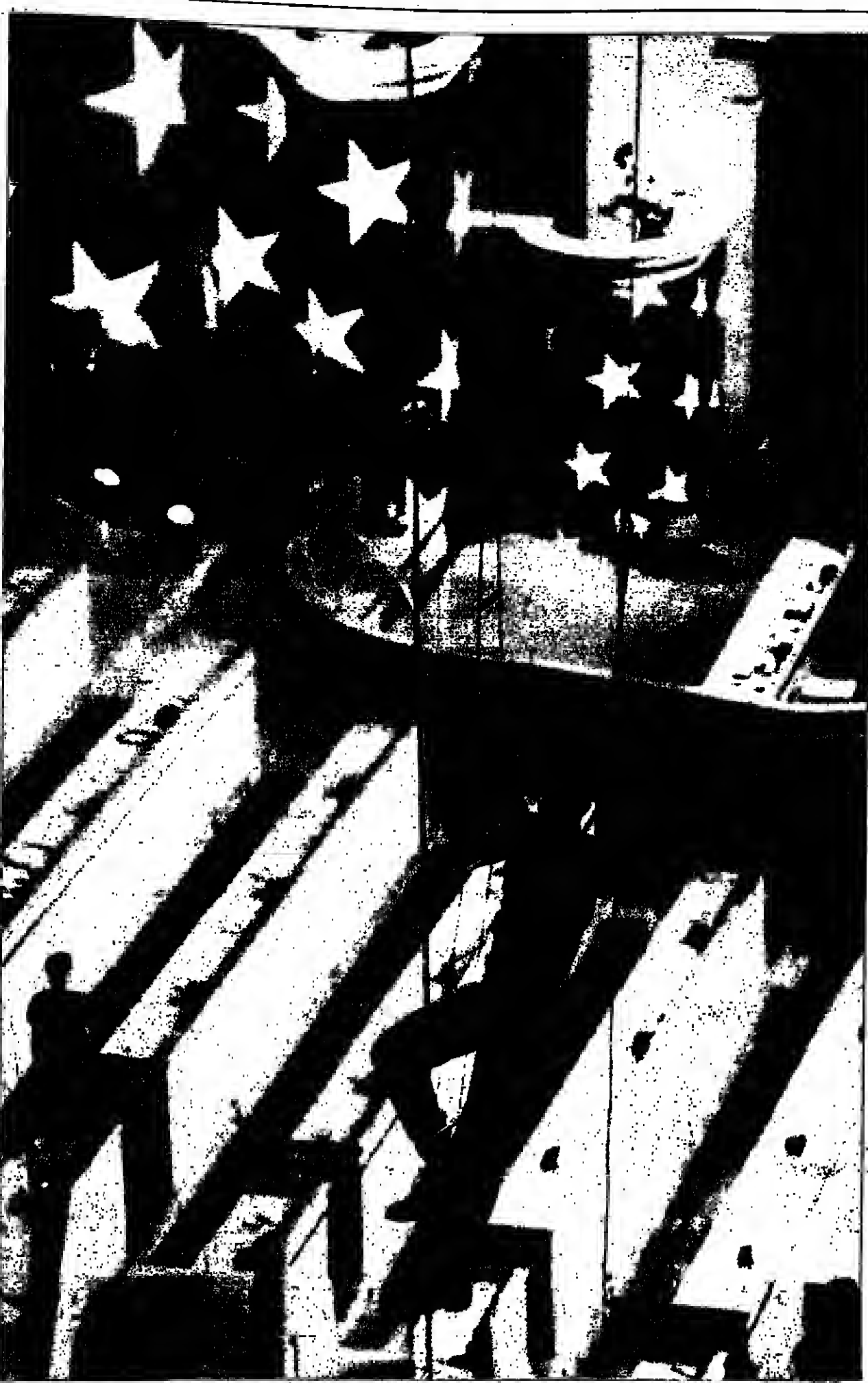
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Star of the show: An electrician prepares the convention arena in Westside, Chicago

## Welfare reform tensions set to darken Democratic convention



Jesse Jackson: Harsh critic of President's stance on welfare

Clinton under fire, writes Rupert Cornwell in Chicago

The Democratic rift over welfare reform, pitting President Bill Clinton against his party's liberal wing and even its very chairman, is casting a gloom over the convention which opens today - the first in Chicago since the bloodstained gathering of 1968 that has won the city an unwelcome niche in American political infamy.

In interviews this weekend, Mr Clinton acknowledged continuing deep tensions in his party over his signature last week of a welfare reform bill that removes federal guarantees of help for poor children dating back to the New Deal of Franklin Roosevelt, the Democrats' greatest political hero of all.

Patricia Ireland, president of the National Organization for Women, denounced Mr Clinton and accused him of caving in to religious and political extremists. "While some of us may hold our noses and vote for President Clinton, many of us will refuse to lift a finger or contribute a penny to his re-election," she said. "We know he is at best our option this year, not our answer."

The disagreement seems bound to surface during four days of confabulation that otherwise will be a re-consecration of a sitting President. "We're not going to push anyone into a corner," Mr Clinton said, referring to scheduled speakers such as the civil rights leader Jesse Jackson and the party's chairman, Senator Christopher Dodd of Connecticut, both of whom have harshly criticised him.

But despite this argument, the differences far outnumber the similarities with 32 years ago, when the Democrats last gathered on the shores of Lake Michigan, and watched the national agony over the Vietnam War turn downtown Chicago into an urban battlefield. For all the controversy within Democratic ranks, welfare reform is overwhelmingly popular among the public. It is unlikely to be more than a sideshow on the path to what Democrats hope will be victory this November and the first time a sitting President from their party has won a second term since FDR in 1936.

Chicago, too, is on its best behaviour. The city has been spruced up with almost Soviet zeal and the police, fresh from "sensitivity training", are under instructions to be as gentle as possible. "There's not going to be any confrontation," says Richard M Daley, Chicago's mayor and son of Richard J Daley, the powerbroker supreme who ruled Chicago for two decades and ordered the savage crackdown against the demonstrators of 1968.

Two designated protest areas have been set up close to the inner Westside sports arena where the convention will be held. Inside the hall, welfare aside, the convention promises to be uneventful and as carefully packaged as its Republican counterpart earlier this month - so uneventful indeed that a presidential train trip has been scheduled across the Midwest for its first three days, during which Mr Clinton will be making policy pronouncements on crime, education and the environment, to create at least the illusion of news.

On Friday, the day after Mr Clinton delivers an acceptance speech his aides are billing as a "State of the Union II", he and Vice-President Al Gore will repeat the post-convention bus tour that was a highlight of the 1992 campaign, this time spending two days travelling through Illinois, Kentucky and Tennessee.

Inside the United Arena, however, the Democrats will have a job to match the spark generated by the Republicans in San Diego. No former presidents, no General Colin Powell will be providing fireworks, and it was not even clear whether Mario Cuomo, former New York Governor and the party's most inspirational speaker - but a bitter foe of the welfare bill - would take the podium here.

Even so, the Republicans' post-convention surge is beginning to fade. A *Newsweek* magazine poll yesterday put Mr Clinton's lead over his Republican challenger Bob Dole at 17 per cent, up from only 2 per cent immediately after San Diego.

Israel at odds: President responds to Palestinian cry for help

## Netanyahu at bay over Weizman's invite to PLO leader

ERIC SILVER  
Jerusalem

President Ezer Weizman, an architect of Israel's 1979 peace treaty with Egypt, responded yesterday to a cry for help from Yasser Arafat by inviting the Palestinian leader to meet him at his private seaside villa at Caesarea in northern Israel.

The invitation was seen as a calculated spur to the right-wing Likud Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, who has prevaricated over a meeting of his own with Mr Arafat since he took office in June. He has declined to set a date for planned talks between the Israeli Defence Minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, and Mr Arafat.

A spokesman for the President told *The Independent* last night that the meeting Mr Weizman would take place before the Jewish new year, which is on 14 September. Asked whether Mr Weizman would co-ordinate the arrangements with the Prime Minister, he replied: "Maybe, maybe not."

Mr Weizman's initiative places the spotlight on a growing anxiety in Israel's defence, political and media establishment that the Netanyahu government is playing for time and no longer sees a need to maintain the peace momentum. Israelis who had begun to



Seaside diplomacy: President Ezer Weizman in Caesarea with Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday

enjoy a more open Middle East suddenly are feeling isolated. Gideon Ezra, a Likud backbencher and former deputy chief of the Shin Bet internal security service, said yesterday: "It is time to stop playing games with the Palestinians."

The influential daily *Ha'aretz* this weekend quoted a from one senior security official that foot-dragging could provoke renewed attacks by Islamist fanatics. Mr Arafat was coming under increasing pressure, the official said, because of the diplomatic stagnation, the collapse of the besieged Palestinian economy and the violation of human rights by the Palestinian police. "If his distress continues," he added, "Arafat may allow his security forces to ease up on Hamas, and he won't cure if there are terror attacks."

After a hastily arranged tête-à-tête with the Prime Minister yesterday, President Weizman denied a report that he had threatened to receive Mr Arafat this week if Mr Netanyahu did not agree to talk to Mr Arafat within 10 days. He also denied he was trying to take over the negotiations. But the 72-year-old President, who has been a minister under both Likud and Labour colours, clearly was in no mood to accept a prime ministerial veto or to wait long.

Mr Weizman said he had received a letter from Mr Arafat complaining about the stalled peace process. "He is in distress," the President said. "Arafat, whether we want it or not, today has control over two million people. When a leader like this asks to see me, I think I must respond to him."

Despite an unconfirmed report by Israel radio that Mr Netanyahu would meet Mr Arafat soon, the Prime Minister was still stonewalling. "I don't think it is worthwhile," he insisted, "to hold a meeting that is just ceremonial. When the time comes when I think there will be a purposeful meeting, it will indeed take place."

## US fails to stem Kurdish bloodshed

HUGH POPE  
Istanbul

The intervention of a senior American official has failed to halt a outbreak of inter-Kurdish fighting in northern Iraq, where hopes are now pinned on a US-backed peace conference due to be held in London.

The Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) said fighting continued with increasing Iranian involvement even after Robert Pelletreau, the State Department's Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, called by satellite telephone to warn the KDP leader, Massoud Barzani, and his rival, Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

On Friday Washington said it believed Mr Pelletreau's intervention had secured a cease-fire and a promise to attend a new round of peace talks, probably in London, after the worst clashes between the Kurds since last year. Both sides spoke of hundreds of casualties in six days of fighting.

The KDP rules that part of northern Iraq near the Turkish and Syrian border, while the PUK is strongest in his towns to the east and along the Iranian border. Since the Gulf war, both have been shielded against intervention from Baghdad by Operation Provide Comfort, a small Western air force based in Turkey, but it has not saved the Kurds from themselves.

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## international

## Himalayan blizzard kills pilgrims

TIM MCGIRK

Hindu pilgrims, trekking to a sacred ice-cave in the Kashmir region of the Himalayas, have long had to contend with the threat of ambush by Muslim guerrillas. But this year was worse: the full wrath of the Himalayas struck the procession of 90,000 devotees as a freak snowstorm and torrential rain killed over 130 pilgrims.

Indian rescue workers battled against a blizzard and landslides to rescue 7,000 stranded pilgrims who are strung out along

50 miles of sheer, ice-covered mountain terrain. Many pilgrims were seen carrying sick and dying relatives down to spots where they could be airlifted out by army helicopters.

Many *sadhus*, holy men, were among the dead. They had undertaken the gruelling mountain pilgrimage wearing nothing but ash smeared on their bodies. "The main reason for the deaths is that the pilgrims had no warm clothing. Many were old people. The holy men were trekking naked," said a doctor at an emergency camp in

Anantnag, 60 miles from the capital, Srinagar. The Hindu pilgrims had gone to worship at Amarnath Cave, 12,725ft up in the Himalayas, where an icicle is said to be a manifestation of the Lord Shiva's phallus.

Most of the victims were from the heat-scorched plains of northern India, ill-equipped to face the fierce Himalayan blizzard. The death toll may rise as more rain and fog strikes Kashmir, slowing rescue efforts. The Indian army has so far evacuated 30,000 pilgrims.

Taking advantage of a few

breaks in the cloud yesterday, helicopters were able to land along the pilgrimage route, dropping off blankets, first-aid kits, and rescuing some of the injured. Despite landslides, troops moved up the mountain trail yesterday with extra food and stretchers. The 50-mile pilgrimage has been officially called off.

The steep, forested valleys near the ice-cave have been overrun by Kashmir separatists who have been fighting Indian security forces during the past six years. Muslim guerrillas last

year set off two bombs during the pilgrimage, killing one official and injuring dozens of Hindu worshippers.

To ease communal tensions, Muslim militants this year vowed to leave the unarmed Hindu pilgrims alone. Once the first survivors of the storm staggered down the mountain and alerted officials, Muslim villagers rushed to save the stranded Hindus, taking them to their homes and giving them food and clothing.

Twice in this stark Himalayan landscape, near the pilgrims'

cave, Westerners have been kidnapped by Muslim rebels. Two Britons, one a schoolboy, were held captive for 17 days in 1994, while last year five Westerners, including Britons Keith Mangan and Paul Wells, were taken captive.

A Norwegian hostage was beheaded by the kidnappers, members of the Al-Faraj group, and the other four may have also been killed last December, according to the testimony of one rebel leader who was seized by the Indian army.

## Frail holy man's stand against the tide of progress

A solitary, frail, old man is standing in the way of the world's sixth largest dam project. Sunderlah Bahuguna lives in a tin shed overlooking the Tehri Dam in a steep Himalayan valley. When the dam is constructed, and the floodwaters rise, he will become its first victim. He is prepared to sacrifice himself rather than see his sacred river, the Ganges, dammed and domesticated.

The Ganges is the holiest of all the rivers of India. Hindus believe that it flows down from the coiled hair of Lord Shiva. During the Cold War, it was enough for the Soviets to plant the false rumour that radiation had leaked out of a broken US spy installation into the Ganges for mobs to besiege the American embassy in New Delhi. The Ganges is also the source of life, and of hydro-electric power: for hundreds of millions of Indians as well as Bangladeshis, and some environmentalists claim that the long-range impact of the proposed dam could be calamitous.

Although Bahuguna is revered as a holy man in the Garhwali foothills of the Himalayas, he is also well-versed in ecology. His main worry, which is shared by many prominent Indian geophysicists as well as thousands of villagers down river, is that the 260-metre-high dam might collapse in an earthquake.

Tehri lies in an active fault zone, and an earthquake which killed thousands several years ago in the nearby valley of Uttarakashimay has cracked a rock-filled dam wall.

Bahuguna has nailed a sign to his shed saying: "If the Tehri dam bursts, a 260m-high column of water would wash away Reshakesh in just 63 minutes; 17 minutes later waters would reach Haridwar."

Both Reshakesh and

## LOCAL HEROES

Sunderlah Bahuguna

Haridwar are pilgrimage towns on the Ganges with populations of more than 100,000.

After authorities failed to listen to pleas by Bahuguna and other ecologists, the septuagenarian *Sadhu* — or holy man — went on a hunger strike which lasted from April until the end of June. He sustained himself with a ritual bath in the Ganges, which he insisted gave him strength, and Himalayan honey and berry juice. He called off his strike after the new Prime Minister, Deve Gowda, promised to open an independent inquiry into the dam project.

Bahuguna has the Hindu deity on his side, as well as the people from 122 villages that will either be completely or partially flooded by the dam. But Bahuguna, the Ganges protector, also faces strong opposition. The Indian government has already sunk over £220m into construction, out of the dam's total cost of £1bn. And, instead of fighting, many of Tehri's 25,000 inhabitants have opted for government compensation and have moved out of the valley, which is soon to be submerged, to a new town on the ridges.

Never the less, Bahuguna summed up the resentment of many mountain folk last year when he wrote to the then Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao: "To build my ancestral house and the fields, my mother carried earth and stones over her head. There can be no compensation for my mother's sweat."

Tim McGirk



In our prayers: Senior sisters of the Missionaries of Charity order pray for Mother Teresa's recovery Photograph: AFP

## Mother Teresa still critical

TIM MCGIRK

Calcutta

Her recovery has been hampered by recurring bouts of malaria.

Mother Teresa's health stabilised slightly yesterday, but she is not out of danger, doctors in Calcutta said. The frail, 86-year-old Nobel Peace laureate and charity worker is still suffering from heart failure and a chest infection.

"Mother Teresa is still conscious, but she cannot speak. She is still hooked up to a respirator machine," a spokesman from the Woodlands Nursing Home in Calcutta said. "She can only breathe with assistance."

Attempts on Saturday to remove her from the life support machines were abandoned when she suffered a relapse.

Her recovery has been hampered by recurring bouts of malaria.

Fitted with a pacemaker, Mother Teresa's weak heart cannot withstand the onslaught of fever. Mother Teresa was rushed from her convent to hospital on Tuesday night suffering from cardiac arrest. Doctors said that yesterday the fever subsided slightly.

"Her heart is now under control, but there is no appreciable change in her condition," the clinic spokesman said. "She is still very, very critical."

Mother Teresa is being treated by a team of the best heart and lung specialists in Calcutta. Special prayers were said for

her yesterday at the many orphanages and homes for leprosy patients and dying homeless people which she has founded in Calcutta. In the city's St Paul's Cathedral, a Mass was held yesterday in which hundreds of people prayed for Mother Teresa to survive.

A volunteer at the headquarters of Mother Teresa's charity work said that yesterday a Muslim cleric also came to offer prayers for her. Even the local Communist chief, Jyoti Basu, who has been Mother Teresa's opponent as well as a grudging admirer, stopped by the clinic to wish for her recovery.

The switchboard at the nursing home was jammed with

thousands of calls from her admirers around the world. "But, privately, some doctors said her chances of survival are slim. We can't keep her on a respirator for more than a week. Otherwise her lungs will fill up with fluid," said one doctor, who preferred to remain anonymous.

At one of Mother Teresa's homes for mentally retarded women, a cook, named Kamala, told a local reporter: "I have distributed food to thousands of people. They are so poor that they cannot even afford plates for lunch and must make do with plastic bags instead. If Mother Teresa can help them survive, why can't our prayers help her survive?"

## SIGNIFICANT SHORTS

A peace pact ending a 24-year Muslim rebellion in the southern Philippines is expected to be signed in Jakarta on 30 August, followed by a ceremonial signing in Manila on 2 September. President Fidel Ramos said. The presidential palace said he had invited Hamid Algaib, secretary-general of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), to be a signatory. An OIC panel chaired by Indonesia is mediating the talks between Manila and the insurgent Moro National Liberation Front. The deal calls for the setting up of an administrative council in the southern Mindanao region as a precursor to a Muslim regional government. The country's 6 million Muslims regard the southern region as their ancestral homeland although they have become a minority in the area after decades of Christian migration. More than 125,000 people have died in the rebellion, which broke out in October 1972 after then president Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law. *Reuters - Manila*

Bodies piled up in mortuaries around Zimbabwe after the government dismissed public-service workers who went on a week-long strike for higher wages. The Public Service Commission said on Saturday it had fired thousands of the strikers, including nurses, junior doctors, mortuary attendants, magistrates, customs officers and firefighters, for defying an order to go back to work. Bereaved relatives said they had been trying since Tuesday to get documents allowing them to bury their dead. The strike, a rare challenge to President Robert Mugabe, has disrupted international and domestic flights and forced many hospitals to handle emergencies only. At the weekend police arrested but later freed two leaders of the Public Service Association (PSA) representing the country's 180,000 civil servants who had stopped work to press demands for wage increases of between 30 and 60 per cent. They say their pay has not kept up with inflation. *Reuters - Harare*

A South African court passes judgment from today on a policeman who says he was apartheid's most effective killer. Eugene de Kock, who commanded a hit-squad unit and informed on his former operatives this year, faces 121 charges, from murder to arms offences, arising from three decades of trying to uphold white supremacy. Mr de Kock, 48, will be the highest-ranking apartheid security official to hear a judge pronounce his fate. The accusations included massacres and random killings, attacks on township hostels and trains, car bombings, torture, beatings and vendettas against fellow police. The judge in Pretoria's Supreme Court is expected to spend much of the week announcing the verdicts. *Reuters - Johannesburg*

A Algerian authorities and opposition groups will hold a national conference, a milestone in President Liamine Zerrouk's drive to reshape the country's future, in the "next few days", an official spokesman announced. Algeria has been seeking a way out of civil strife which has rocked the country since the authorities in 1992 cancelled a general election in which the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) took a commanding lead. An estimated 50,000 people have been killed. Parties involved in a preliminary committee meeting included the former sole ruling party, the National Liberation Front, two legal Islamist groups, Hamas and Nahda, and the secular anti-Islamist Rally for Democracy and Culture. The FIS is outlawed and was not involved. *Reuters - Paris*

Archaeologists in Egypt have found pots used by Ancient Egyptians in burial rites that, they say, may reveal the secrets of mummification. Mohammed Salah, director of the Egyptian Museum, said a US team found the pots, some of which contain incense, in a tomb in Dahshour, 25 miles from Cairo. Dahshour is the site of Egypt's second-largest pyramid, built for the pharaoh Senefertu 4,500 years ago. One jar contained "substances and materials used in the conservation of mummies", Mr Salah said. *Reuters - Cairo*

The world and Olympic champion Alexander Popov, considered the world's fastest swimmer, was stabbed by watermelon vendors in Moscow. Popov, 25, who won two gold and two silver medals at Atlanta, was recovering after surgery. He was taking a woman home on Saturday when he got into an argument and was stabbed in the stomach. *AP - Moscow*

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## Bosnia's former victims are accused of poll terror tactics

Christopher Bellamy on the menace faced by opposition politicians before voting day

Bihac - The appearance of tranquil normality has returned, only nine months after the end of a three-year siege during which the Muslim enclave was cut off by the Bosnian Serbs on one side and Serbs in the Krajina area of Croatia on the other.

A police lorry for towing away illegally parked cars trundled down the main street. "That's the ultimate normality indicator," joked one British army officer from the British-led division responsible for this sector. The children who played in a muddy field west of the town, beneath the mountains from which the Serbs had been driven, looked healthy and happy for youngsters who had grown up through three years of darkness and despair.

But appearances are deceptive. The Bihac area has seen the most blatant intimidation and harassment of opposition candidates in the forthcoming elections anywhere in Bosnia.

In the past two weeks there have been eight beatings in police custody and 11 mysterious explosions, some of which have been directed at opponents of the Muslim SDA party of President Alija Izetbegovic. The acts pose a serious threat to the elections planned for 14 September.

An official of the UN's international police (IPTF), which monitors the Bosnian police, reported that the "level of intimidation" in Cazin, 12 miles north of Bihac, "was at such a level that because of it they [the electorate] may well not go to vote on election day".

Bihac has a strange history. It was the only area where Muslims fought Muslims, when a rebel Muslim army under Fikret Abdic battled against Muslims loyal to the Sarajevo government, with help from the Serbs. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which is supervising the Bosnian elections, and the IPTF have highlighted

to go in the elections he was very pleased with the number of people who had registered to vote but was "less happy with the political atmosphere that is developing".

"There have been a number of incidents, especially in Cazin recently, in which representatives of basically all opposition parties have been targeted," he said. Another incident involved campaign material belonging to Zdravko Dizdarevic, the opposition coalition, which was confiscated by the police in Bihac and partly destroyed. The confiscation took place because the material was "against the interests of the ruling party".

That is no way to run an election, Mr Karsten told journalists from the Muslim-Croat federation and the Republika Srpska, whom the Nato peace forces had brought down from Banja Luka into Muslim territory by helicopter. "I call on those responsible for creating a positive campaign atmosphere to think about the image that this canton [one of 10 in the Muslim-Croat half of Bosnia] is projecting, if there are abuses of human rights and harassment of opposition politicians," he said. Although there were problems in Republika Srpska, they were not as bad as in Bihac, Mr Karsten said.

The IPTF reported disturbing incidents on both sides. They began with the death of a

55-year-old Muslim, Hasan Kovacic, in Serb police custody on 1 August after suffering 16 broken ribs and with a litre of blood on his lungs. A second case concerned Alexander Baric, a resident of Sanski Most known as "the Chetnik" (Serbian fighter) who was beaten by the local Muslim police. The IPTF had requested access to the prisoner, who was allegedly beaten for five days, but refused. It was alleged the Muslim police tried to make him confess to war crimes, which he denied.

There appears to have been a systematic campaign against opponents of the SDA. One Abdic supporter was allegedly beaten in Bihac police custody, and a hand grenade thrown at his house while he was being held.

Last Saturday in nearby Velika Kladusa the IPTF received a complaint from an Abdic supporter who said she and four others had been detained and told they should "not be so open in their affiliation to Mr Abdic, or they could face some consequences".



incidents in Serb-controlled territory. But they place most stress on the authorities in Bihac. Yesterday, Abdic posters were plentiful. Although Mr Abdic faces war-crimes charges in Bosnia, he has not been indicted by the international criminal tribunal in The Hague and is eligible to stand for election under the Dayton peace agreement rules. Karsten Geier, deputy director of OSCE in Bihac, said that with three weeks

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# No more freedom for the Prison Service

The Harry Houdini of the Home Office does it again. A wave of huck-passing, confusion and administrative anarchy engulfs the Prison and Probation Services but one man stays dry, building his sand-castles of political ambition. It's Michael Howard, the minister who makes such a fine distinction between responsibility and accountability but who, when the flak flies, turns out to show neither.

As they say among the criminal classes, Michael Howard is a man with form. Attempted IRA escape from Whitemoor, breakout at Parkhurst, the expensive sacking of Derek Lewis, the head of the Prison Service, a succession of reversals at the hands of the judges... they hardly describe a Home Secretary who is well-advised and in competent command. Yet until last week Mr Howard had been having a good summer, in party political terms. The voluntary-until-the-police-and-Home-Office-deem-it-compulsory identity card was finally unveiled. While colleagues sunned themselves, the Tory Stakhanovite was fielding Labour's seasonal onslaught. But too busy with the politics, he did not seem to notice that a flood of prisoners was being released without warning or preparation or concern for their care (not that Mr Howard is keen on after-care).

And this was happening not because the Home Office had said so; not because the hard men of the Prison Off-

icers Association took unilateral action. It happened because unnamed officials pressed the exit button. They overturned a 30-year understanding of what the law said about concurrent jail sentences and how time spent on remand should count towards total time in prison. Why did their legal advice (gathered on whose authority?) differ so much from Mr Howard's latest opinion, hastily written by David Pannick QC? It amounts to a cock-up, yet Mr Howard's accountability seems once more to be taking the shape of saying "not guilty" because he did not know.

Which makes the case for his dismissal even stronger. A home secretary should know. Were the Prime Minister more wedded to sound governance than petty party, ie, Euro-sceptic balancing, he would long ago have given Michael Howard his marching orders. But oddly enough this is not an occasion for rehearsing the case against the man. A new home secretary installed tomorrow would confront structural problems which Mr Howard may have exacerbated but is certainly not the author of. His successor, regardless of party, would need to huddle down to a reform of a public service the head and limbs of which do not seem to connect.

Reform of prison management has come and gone. Six years ago prisons were lodged in an "executive agency", supposedly at arm's length from the Home Office. This turns out to have

been a bureaucratic farce. (This failure has nothing to do with contracting out parts of the service, about bringing the private sector in, about hinging the Prison Officers Association to heel - all moves which have something to be said for them.) The naivety of the executive-agency concept was a belief that management could be divided from politics, executive from operational decisions.

Indeed, the most damning thing that can be said about the release fiasco is that it would have happened in much the same way had Derek Lewis been retained. There is something rotten in the secretive relationship between prisons and Home Office and it seems to have got worse, not better. Some in Whitehall had high hopes that Richard Wilson, the permanent secretary at the Home Office, would improve communications but his reputation, too, must suffer in this latest debacle. Derek Lewis, who had been appointed to run the service from a private-sector background, was replaced by a civil service insider, Richard Tilt. Yet he seems to have forgotten the cardinal rule of keeping the minister informed. Mr Tilt has some searching questions to answer.

The management of prisons will always be political. Depriving people of their lib-

erty is the ultimate expression of the state's power. Public concern about prison conditions and the nature of sentences, about escapes and releases, will always be high. Some do-gooders might wish the public to care less so that more prisoners might be transferred into less exacting regimes or released altogether. So, in prison, the line between what can safely be left to managers and what ministers need to know is never going to be fixed hard and fast. It was not when Merlyn Rees was Home Secretary (the last Labour example); it will not be when and if Jack Straw takes over. The Government's mistake - which is better laid at the door of Kenneth Clarke than Michael Howard - was to imply that prisons could be managed out of sight, out of mind. They cannot. The Home Secretary has to be in continuous contact with those responsible for the jails day to day. This is a fact of prison life, and will remain so regardless of how sentences are fixed or of how much flexibility courts and criminal justice system are given in disposing of convicted offenders.

Michael Howard - assuming the great escapologist gets away with it again - has two urgent tasks. One is to get behind this latest cascade of error. Who ordered the releases and why? If he can bring in retired army generals to conduct inquiries into escapes from Parkhurst, he surely needs to make a priority of establishing the line of command in his own backyard. The second

is to abandon the flimflam of "executive agency" status, reabsorb prisons into the mainstream of Home Office administration and establish traditional reporting lines. Home secretaries cannot and should not be held responsible for every creak in the prison door nor even every disturbance on E wing. But they need to know, within an instant of that disturbance occurring, why and wherefore. Only then can they begin to perform the task of accounting to Parliament and public.



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## Better drivers? Pas du tout

British motorists are shameless. According to a weekend survey, huge proportions of them have not mastered even the basic French needed to read traffic instructions. Barely a third knew the French speed limit expressed in kilometres. But still they assert they are better drivers than those on the other side of the Channel - by miles. It is merely annoying that so many British drivers end up, carelessly, in the *78page* queues on the *autoroute*. But not to be able to recognise basic signs such as roadworks is positively dangerous. It would serve them right if a few more visits to *centres d'entraîment* accompanied by the *gendarmes* took place as a result.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Rape victims do not need more torment

Sir: Earlier this year I was attacked and raped at knifepoint by an intruder in my own home. The attack lasted half an hour. I had no visible injuries, but it shattered my life. Rape is not merely enforced sex. It devastates and destroys everything of any value and meaning. It is not just a particularly nasty crime - it's a crime in a league of its own, and the law should recognise this. The police have learnt and now understand more about the true nature of rape and its aftermath. It's about time our legal system did the same.

My attacker is awaiting trial, with DNA evidence linking him to three other rapes. Until yesterday, if I had been told that he had the right to cross-examine me at length in court, regardless of any distress or suffering it caused me, I would have laughed in disbelief ("Rape victim's foul court ordeal", 23 August). Surely, this would make the law virtually an accessory to a further crime?

I've already suffered the ordeal of attending an identity parade. I knew my attacker couldn't see me, but seeing him at close quarters brought on a surge of terror and panic which almost made me faint and for which I was totally unprepared. He had his solicitor there to protect his rights and interests. I had no one. If the law gives a defendant the right to cross-examine a victim in court, regardless of whether exercising that right is causing distress and suffering to the victim, then there is clearly something abysmally wrong with the law.

Legal experts point out that withdrawing a rape defendant's right to defend himself in court would breach a most fundamental right. What is going on here?

The point is, he has rights. The victim has none at all. Any victim of crime should have the right to be protected from further trauma and suffering, and this right should be absolutely enshrined and protected by law. The defendant may or may not be guilty. The victim most certainly is not. Both parties should have rights, and both sets of rights should be regarded as equal.

When there is a conflict of interest between the defendant's rights and those of the victim, a compromise should be sought and found. A fundamental principle appears to be missing from the British justice system if it allows a rapist to torment and intimidate his victim in a court of law.

NAME AND ADDRESS  
WITHHELD

Sir: In my experience as a police officer, acts of rape appear to be about domination, power and humiliation as much as sexual gratification, and it is the psychological damage which is usually the worst and longest lasting.

In allowing a victim to be cross-examined by her suspected assailant, the entire court was witness to a continuation of the very crime it was supposed to be hearing.

Dr NJ GILBERT  
Forensic medical examiner  
Gloucester



### UK ill served by book-learning

Sir: As a way of keeping kids off the street and youngsters off the dole, there may well be some merit in David Blunkett's suggestion that 85 per cent should gain at least five GCSE passes at grades A-C ("The case for improving the test", 22 August). However, Mr Blunkett is deluding the nation in insisting that "our economic competitiveness depends on our matching the skills achieved by young people in countries such as Taiwan and Korea".

It might bolster national morale for politicians to pretend that we can, by reading books, regain the position we fail to hold by making goods, but as the burgeoning unemployment and under-employment of graduates and YTS trainees amply testify, the bleak fact is that Britain is, in economic terms, already too clever by a third, if not by half.

Of course, it is arguable that it is better to be overqualified than underqualified. What is not quite so easily understood is that dangerous complacency in high places which leads Mr Blunkett, as it does Mrs Shepherd, to imagine that having more and more youngsters sitting in libraries, lecture rooms and laboratories is a precondition for economic revival.

In last year's 31 survey of the UK's most successful independent wealth creators, two-thirds had never seen the inside of a university, whilst upwards of a quarter had, perished the thought, managed to benefit the country through an education that finished at GCSE. It would be a pity if Mr Blunkett should ignore the

contribution to the country's economic well-being of those who are not all that interested in passing exams.

Dr JAMES MURPHY  
Department of Educational Research  
University of Lancaster

Sir: Simon Harrison (Letters, 16 August) misses the point when he writes that examination candidates are competing for opportunities. This is true, but it does not mean that the examinations themselves form the competition.

An academic qualification is meant to show an individual's proficiency. In this respect, they are more like driving tests. Fixed thresholds between grades mean that employers and universities are able to ascertain the level of proficiency they would expect of a candidate who achieves a given grade. If an employer or higher education establishment is swamped with applicants who make the grades, they can always raise the minimum qualifications required, or look for other less measurable qualities in candidates: aspects of character which are every bit as important as academic qualifications.

ALEXANDER MACFIE  
Abergavenny, Gwent

Sir: The word "elitist" seems to crop up every time you writers discuss education. It covers two quite different attitudes.

Exclusive elitists want an educational system designed for the benefit of the cleverest few per cent. Not guilty, m'bud, and I know

very few educators who are.

Missionary elitists believe there are real advantages to a style of thought that is historically associated with a small minority, and they want it distributed as widely as possible. Guilty as charged, and so are most of my colleagues.

The style I believe in assumes the right to query what claims mean, explore their implications, test them, and improve on them - and knows you can't do that unless you criticise and develop your own thought processes. It is intimately tied to research, which is why missionary elitists want students heavily exposed to people who are active in research. If I am overruled by received wisdom, how can I teach my students not to be?

The third party are the paternalists who think most of the poor dears need something easier - memorised passages from a pasteurised text, rote learn a few procedures, follow the instructions on the coursework pack. Those people thrive on popular suspicion of "elitism".

RODDY COWIE  
Belfast

Sir: If more students pass in A-levels and GCSEs then standards are slipping. If fewer students pass, that definitely proves that standards are slipping. Modular tests allow students to retake as they go - thus standards are slipping. Now we hear the markers are to blame for being too lax, further proof that standards are slipping.

However the results go, bad or

bad (for according to some there are never any good results) some commentators will continue to say "standards are slipping".

MICHAEL G H ROWDEN  
Bath, Avon

### Le Strange did only our ceiling

Sir: In his cheerful feature on Humstanton's biggest ever birthday party (17 August), Bob Carter tells us that Henry Styleman Le Strange designed the cave of Ely Cathedral in the 19th century. Unfortunately, Le Strange missed this particular honour by a few hundred years: the nave of Ely Cathedral is Norman. He did, however, design the ceiling of the nave, which was painted in the last century. He painted the first six bays, with assistance, himself. He then died and his friend Thomas Gambier Parry completed the work.

The ceiling is well worth seeing but, as I suspect Henry Styleman Le Strange would be the first to admit, the real glory of the nave is the Norman architecture.

Canon JOHN INGE  
Ely Cathedral

### Tell me what Labour is for

Sir: How ironic that in a page-long interview ("We need substance, not style", Prescott tells Blair", 16 August) John Prescott didn't actually refer to any of Labour's

"principles and ideas" and still less the "substance" - the presentation of which he disagrees with. How many more opportunities to explain what they really stand for are Labour going to blow before the British public vote in the Conservatives for a fifth term purely out of exasperation and apathy engendered by Labour's shoddy PR campaign?

I am 25 years old and although I voted Conservative in the previous general election, I am now just as keen as anybody to ensure that a proper alternative - one that believes in and cares for this country and all its people and their interests - is voted into office next year.

Two years ago I would have happily voted Labour in a general election purely to get the Conservatives out. Now I know less about what Labour stands for than ever. I'm not surprised that Clare Short is disillusioned - that Tony Blair saw someone as tenacious and honest as her as a liability speaks for itself.

As long as they're not the Conservatives I don't particularly care who wins the next election, be they Liberal Democrats, Greens or Monster Raving Loonies. I might even consider adding Labour to that list if they would only give me something to believe in.

PAUL COOPER  
Twickenham, Middlesex

### Start at the top

Sir: Would not the country benefit from the formation of a Penal League for Howard Reform?

DAN GOLD  
London W13

### America rates Britten highly

Sir: While vacationing in the UK, I was extremely surprised and annoyed to read your article denigrating the accomplishments of the late Benjamin Britten ("Queen's musician in attack on Britten", 26 July). It contained an endless number of absurd statements by none other than the Master of the Queen's Music, Malcolm Williamson.

In American musical circles, Benjamin Britten is one of our most highly regarded composers, and rightfully so. He is ranked with the very finest 20th-century composers. Why Dr Williamson believes that Britten's private life will eventually destroy his stature as a composer is incomprehensible. If this were so, I fear that many more composers would have been lost to us by now.

I do believe that the Queen might be better served by the Master of the Queen's Music if she would reconsider his appointment and make him Master of the Queen's Sheep. If put out to pasture, he would fit in well with all the other bleating.

JOHN TRUDEAU  
Music Director and Conductor  
Columbia Symphony Orchestra  
Portland, Oregon, USA

### Whitehall wedded to car culture

Sir: Your leading article (22 August) is headed "Motor pollution is an issue for local will", yet Nicholas Schoon's analysis overleaf demonstrates that the major solutions need to be addressed at national level. John Gummer appears to have carried out a hasty PR exercise devoid of much practical action other than passing the buck to the local authorities, as in the Transport Green Paper.

Derek Osborn's optimistic analysis is also too hopeful by far: in reality other government departments are dismissive of Department of the Environment intentions. One only has to look at the strange interpretation of DoE policies which the Department of Transport presented as evidence of sustainable development to the Heathrow inquiry, as evidence instead that the DoT will not be moved from its role of industry promotion. Add to this the fact that the Department of Trade and Industry has been giving subsidies to car manufacturers to produce more cars, while trying to attract "inward investment".

There is no substitute for a comprehensive strategy to make the maintenance of our basic materials for breathing and living a first priority for government, rather than the pursuit of wealth.

GORDON GLASS  
Director 2020 Vision Ltd  
Bath, Avon

### Sky highway

Sir: Charles Arthur is too quick in dismissing BSkyB's plan for a satellite Internet connection ("The digital road", 24 August).

As a typical home Internet user, only a few per cent of my connect time is spent sending requests for information or e-mails to the Internet. The majority of the time is used in receiving the huge text, graphics and sound files that come back. What could be better than a three-lane motorway in one direction and a cycle path in the other, when most of the traffic is going one way?

W I PRICE  
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## interview

## Cycle logical warfare

A close encounter with Reclaim The Streets, the "notorious urban guerrilla group", reveals the pushers of pedal power are really peddling empowerment



DAVID AARONOVITCH

I am going to meet my three Reclaimers at number 140 Somers Road, a small, paint-peeling, dirty-windowed address abutting a railway bridge in an unappealing part of south London - so I carefully park my car outside number 70 and hoof the remaining 200 yards. Well, you don't want to start off on the wrong foot, do you? And getting this interview has been a bit of a struggle. Many phone calls have been made, and not a few dusty conversations have ensued with women called Theba and men called Dave, most of whom make it clear that they have little time for newspapers, profiles and journalists. But at last a nice-sounding young woman called Katherine has agreed that a meeting might be a good idea, and that it is conceivable that I might treat the anti-car cause fairly.

The door to 140 is opened by a willowy young white woman with dreadlocks. From behind her peep two lovely looking children of about six and three, both exhibiting the fearless curiosity that the kids of careful and affectionate parents seem to have. Odette leads me past a jumble of old bikes in the narrow hall - the handlebars and brakes clashing on my over-large stomach - and into an extraordinary kitchen.

In its jumbled lack of modernity it resembles those old photos of the inside of Highland crofts just after the First World War. Only the frame remains of the kitchen door, while the backdoor out to the ramshackle garden is made out of plywood, with a butterfly-shaped perspex window. In the room itself are all the familiar objects you'd expect in a kitchen, but in far from familiar form. Photos of family hang from a drooping electrical cord, the few remaining floorboards have been

painted many colours in the ancient past, and there is a hole in the ceiling above the sink. Alongside an old article on Art, Action and Automobiles posted on the wall is a tapestry unappealing part of south London - so I carefully park my car outside number 70 and hoof the remaining 200 yards. Well, you don't want to start off on the wrong foot, do you? And getting this interview has been a bit of a struggle. Many phone calls have been made, and not a few dusty conversations have ensued with women called Theba and men called Dave, most of whom make it clear that they have little time for newspapers, profiles and journalists. But at last a nice-sounding young woman called Katherine has agreed that a meeting might be a good idea, and that it is conceivable that I might treat the anti-car cause fairly.

Odette ushers me into a painted cane chair, which creaks ominously beneath me, and she smilingly offers tea. Soon, Katherine and Brian arrive. Katherine is dressed in old-style cycle shorts (not those labia-bugging horrors of the disco world) and white polo shirt. Brian, in his late 20s, is scruffy-bearded, sandalled - easy to caricature, since he is also the most intense and didactic of the three.

The very first thing I say (that I want some personal background for an article, which will not simply deal with the mechanics of Reclaim The Streets) leads to a long adjournment in the back garden, while they discuss with each other what they all feel about this; I am left to finish my tea in the creaky chair. When they come back they have arrived at a decision, but somehow I never find out what it is, and none of us ever mentions it again.

So here I am, facing three activists in what one national press agency has described this weekend as a "notorious urban guerrilla group", because they were behind Saturday's disturbances in Brighton, where 75 Reclaimers were nicked when they blocked a roundabout.

This language characterises Reclaim The Streets as being of a piece with the anti-industrial terrorism of the Unabomber, and heirs to the tradition of the Weathermen, the Baader-Meinhof gang, the

Symbionese Liberation Army and the Angry Brigade. Am I scared? Not a lot.

I know what they do, I tell them. They turn up unexpectedly and en masse in busy streets during rush-hour, and hold street parties. The result is gridlock for motorists, a jolly day for residents and a big point made about how the motor car is ruining our cities and our lives.

But how do they do it? It must, after all, take formidable organisation and military-style discipline? Not at all, says Odette. Every week there's a

meeting at the group's headquarters in a decrepit part of central London. Between 70 and 80 people turn up and discuss whatever they want to, including future actions.

"There's collective responsibility and no hierarchy," she says, "and no pre-established power structure." "Oh yes," I say, "so how do you stop the single-minded and the bitches from taking over?" The two women give Brian a funny little look, and he blushes and grins. "We do runarounds, so that everybody gets to talk," Odette replies, "but it doesn't always work."

So what happens is this. A local group might decide that it wants to call a "street party". It will liaise with others in the network who might be able to help with advice, transport or equipment. On the appointed day marshals with armbands and foot-sloggers (a "critical mass") from a meeting point to a pre-arranged spot. Trucks carrying sound equipment, "tripods" (scaffolding which can carry several demonstrators) and bouncy castles will get there at the same time. The police,

defeated, will find themselves looking at a thoroughfare turned in seconds into a pedestrian precinct full of party-goers. This is an action whose grandmother was Greenham Common, and whose parents were Raves and Convoys.

The police, the three assure me, are not amused. Had I heard of the Forward Intelligence Team at Scotland Yard? This is a 15-person squad (led

by a Barry Norman - and very nice too), dedicated to building up a profile of activists, predicting their behaviour and preempting their activities. Members of FIT, they claim, follow them home and harass them for silly offences, like no bike lights during the day. "They follow us in vans," says Katherine, "and when we come to places where vans can't follow, they let down a ramp and come after us on mountain-bikes." In addition the offices of RTS have recently been

raided and all the computers seized. After an estimated £46,000 of repairs had to be carried out on the M41 - a tiny strip of motorway in west London - following a street party, the police were looking for evidence of a conspiracy to cause criminal damage. "But what is going on in Newbury is criminal damage to the planet," argues Odette. I ask them what their philosophy is, and they reply that it is "direct action". I protest that this isn't a philosophy, it's a tactic. No, says Brian, it's about empowerment. If people take direct action of one sort or another (occupying closing schools, living up trees, attending a street party), the very taking of it transforms their situation, as though a light-bulb had suddenly gone on in their heads.

It works this way, according to Katherine: "People come to the group initially because they are anti-car. And then they see

that it is connected to so many other things. They also get a sense of what they can do about it." Which does not include voting. "Government is the servant of the wealth-boosters," says Brian. "It keeps profits flowing to the business class." This latter group has, says Brian, enticed all of us into dependence upon their products, gulled us into consumerism, co-opted us into its war against the planet.

Er, is it so simple? Aren't we the real culprits, with our love of the freedom and independence that the motor car (I think fondly of the Toyota sitting outside number 70) bestows upon us? Odette gives me a brilliant and sympathetic smile. "I drove until two years ago," she admits, "but the day you give up your car is the day you start living - the day you live life on the streets, the day you start to meet your neighbours." For her, rather more than for the slightly Marxist Brian, it is a matter of personal responsibility.

OK, I argue, but what about the mobility the car has given people, allowing us to see

things and places and make choices we never had before? But it has imprisoned our children in their homes and poisoned the air of our cities, says Brian. Worse, it has destroyed communities; made us turn our backs on our neighbours and retreat. Odette agrees vigorously. She wants smaller, self-governing, self-sufficient, human-sized communities - "a new way to live on this earth". But do people always want to experience community life? Close communities can be smothering, nosy, normative

We may have to wait for a whole generation to die off

places, where the unusual or dynamic is treated with suspicion. I am examined with almost psychiatric scrutiny. "Not all communities are dysfunctional," says Brian, missing my point. Which is strange, because he himself has escaped from a post-industrial community in the North-west, and become part of a much looser one - consisting of comrades and other activists - in a car-bound urban jungle.

For him, however, it was a generational rebellion. "We may have to wait for a whole generation to die off," he tells me. "The post-war boom, patriotic, glorious England lot." The generation of Brian's mum and dad, I suspect - the generation without soul, which has lost touch with itself, which hasn't yet realised that more doesn't make for happier, or that independence cannot be a substitute for inter-dependence, and which cannot work out why it is so unhappy, so alienated and so bloody anxious.

I shake hands, hush my paunch on the Raleighs and slink back to the car. Much that Odette, Brian and Katherine have to say seems slightly barney. Some of the things they do must be intensely irritating for those affected. But there are some important truths about the way we live today. And, just as significant, they have some how managed to harness the age, and come to believe that they can actually make a difference. Perhaps they can.

The day you give up the car is the day you start living

## For sure, the Irish can tell a jeauke

For the past week or so in Edinburgh otherwise sane people have been edging up to me in conversations at the bar or even elsewhere and saying, "So who do you reckon for the Perrier Award then?" and I have had to say to them in all honesty, "Frankly, I don't give a toss who wins the Perrier Award, because it's the biggest waste of time since...". at which they edge away, believing me to be slightly mad, and so they miss the end of my sentence which is, "the biggest waste of time since they invented the Man of the Match Award in cricket, which has been the most pointless exercise since Miss World, which in turn..."

But I really cannot see any point in the Perrier Award at all except to a) sell more Perrier, b) give performers something to talk about in the second week of the Fringe, when conversation is beginning to flag, and c) give comedy an importance out of all proportion on the Fringe. It doesn't put more bums on seats, it does

n't mean anything much outside Edinburgh, and I suspect it probably doesn't even sell any more Perrier. Do you think retailers all over the country are stockpiling cases of Perrier because today they are going to be stamped by comedy fans? And that off-lence managers everywhere will wink and say, "Aha, they must have judged the Perrier over the weekend!"? I doubt it.

Nor will Bill Bailey be feeling very happy. Comedian Bill Bailey was the hot tip for the Perrier this year. I heard hundreds of identical conversations that went like this...

"Have you heard that Bill Bailey is hot favourite for the Perrier this year?"

"Meaning that he hasn't got a hope?"

"Exactly."



Miles Kington

one of the best of the new crop of funny men from Ireland. They were right. He is. Not only has he got oodles of soft Irish charm and a wicked look in his eye as he gently sways around the stage with a glass and a cigarette, not only has he got a keen eye for the idiocies of Irish daily life and the real world as well, but he has a poetic gift for the slightly ley end to a joke. Explaining his fondness for smoking and drinking, for example, he said simply, "It's how I am. If I gave it all up, I would bleed". Not an obvious comic line, but it got a huge laugh. Elsewhere he talked about something that was "so boring it almost

attained spirituality". Elsewhere he complained about our banality in describing aches and pains and accidents, and said to us: "Instead of saying, 'Oh, what happened to her was that she fell over when she was drunk and hurt her thigh...', why don't we freshen it up and say, 'Oh, what happened was that she fell over when drunk and hurt her thigh and opened an antiques shop?'".

Now, this sort of thing baldly written down may not be world-shaking, and if that were all his act were it would not be either, but added as a sort of soft Irish mist to an already good outline, it works wonders. There are some very sharp lines ("I was educated by priests. They taught everything, even sex education, which was rather a hands-on experience...") but mostly it's all charm and word magic.

As my own show was due to start in less than an hour, I had to creep out before the end. The next day I heard that Dylan Moran had won the Perrier Prize overnight.

This meant two things. It meant that I felt very sorry for Bill Bailey and it also meant that I had become probably the first person to walk out of a Perrier Award-winner's show on the day he is crowned.

Of course, if you take the Perrier seriously, it also means that Irish comedy is even more on the up and up. Remember when the Irish joke was the funniest thing an Englishman could think of? This said more about the English than the Irish, who had always had more of the gift of the gab than the English, but the wheel of fortune has certainly come half-circle with the emergence of Irish stand-ups like Sean Hughes and Dylan Moran. And yet, and yet... I wonder if the Perrier will do anything good for Dylan Moran. Ten years ago I was on the Perrier judging panel. That year it was won by another Irishman, Ben Keaton. And where is HE now?

If I find out the answer to this in the next 24 hours, I will let you know tomorrow.

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# the commentators

As polling day approaches in Britain and the United States, politicians are pulling their usual tricks. Independent columnists warn of dangers for the public, parties and press

## Conning the media

A warning of the sheer scale of politicians' efforts as they get close to an election was provided by the Republican convention in San Diego earlier this month. Here was a great political party, whose dull candidate, Bob Dole, was trailing President Clinton by 20 points.



ANDREAS WHITTAM SMITH

The question was how it could best engineer a recovery by using the wonderful selling opportunity provided by an hour of prime-time television on four consecutive days.

The party managers knew exactly when the networks would screen live coverage of the convention each evening, so they decided to control what happened to the last second. Market research and daily polling had also indicated what the public apparently wanted. So Mr Dole was persuaded to put forward tax and budget proposals of the kind he had spent a lifetime in Congress denouncing, and his running mate, Jack Kemp, ditched his liberal opinions regarding affirmative action and immigration.

That achieved, the Republican Party managers then set about creating an "infomercial" so that the 15,000 journalists sent to cover the nomination would be bypassed. Speakers' scripts had to be approved—the Republican governor of California refused this humiliation and was denied the rostrum. Applause was graduated and carefully rehearsed. Neither supporters nor opponents of abortion were given a hearing even though the issue is as important to Republicans as Europe is to the Conservatives.

The far-right champion, Pat Buchanan, who obtained 3 million votes in the primaries, was silenced. Protest groups were confined to an obscure parking lot and each given precisely 55 minutes to make their presentation, at which point the microphones were switched off.

The networks, eyes open, knowing they had been had, ran this contrived event exactly as it was presented. The Fourth Estate was nullified. Mr Dole's ratings jumped 10 points.

well below American levels. The party conferences in their present form cannot be boiled down into an hour's infomercial each day. TV news programmes are unlikely to be captured by the political parties.

Of course the media do routinely try to interrupt the message. For example, at midnight last Tuesday on radio news the BBC led its story on Maurice Saatchi's elevation to the House of Lords with Labour's protests. We were thus informed of the reaction before we were given the news even though the item was absolutely fresh; midnight was the time fixed for the announcement. A similar technique is to suggest a "split" or "damaging gap" whenever a politician departs from a word-for-word rendering of party policy.

Both these familiar approaches, often distortions of balanced reporting, are ways of challenging political marketing campaigns. Frankly neither achieves very much.

But there is a movement of great promise under way. This is the detachment of traditional Tory newspapers—the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Times*, *Mail*, *Express*, *Sun* and their Sunday counterparts—from the Government, which they have periodically attacked since the last election. This change gives hope that for the first time this century these newspapers may decide to become propaganda sheets for the Conservatives during the next election campaign. Whether any one of them will actually recommend readers to vote Labour or Liberal Democrat is impossible to guess. But it would be a tremendous gain if they at last give up the role of Tory megaphone.

It is also important that newspapers and broadcasting companies try to widen the debate well beyond the narrow bounds set by the political parties. The list of subjects not debated during a general election campaign is extraordinary. Here are some questions that will be neither asked nor answered unless the media raises them: should the proportion of national wealth devoted to defence continue to run well ahead of what, say, Germany or Japan spends? What should be done about increasing poverty, the plight of the young homeless and unemployment rates of more than 20 per cent in black communities? Should the UK go forward into a currency union with the rest of Europe? The party managers want to close down debate; the media must force it open.

early Renaissance painters to achieve a totally new kind of three-dimensional illusionism and realism. A painting was likened to a view through a window, and Antonello da Messina's small panel *St Jerome in His Study* (c1475; London, National Gallery) seems to play on the theme of creating a world within worlds. We peer through a painted arch to the lovingly detailed scholar's study, but beyond lie further windows, and beyond them, a glimpse of the riches of the natural world. The clear daylight and the way in which the perspective emphasises the scholar's concentration convey a Renaissance admiration for learning and reason.



Facing voters: the price of Clinton's success is a party with few beliefs. Without media vigilance, British leaders will avoid the big issues. Fiona Hansory/PA

## Bankrupt Democrats

For a party quietly confident it will retain the White House, and which is starting to nurture secret ambitions of recapturing at least one of the two chambers of Congress this November, the Democrats are in quite a bit of a bind.



RUPERT CORNWELL

The strange paradox of American politics as the party of Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson gathers for its convention in Chicago today. Victory is within reach—yet what Bill Clinton and the Democratic Party stand for is a matter for the seers of ancient Delphi.

Consider first the astonishing role reversal of the two major parties. If the bond market has been skidding of late, one reason has been the opinion poll bounce of the Dole-Kemp ticket. Could those Republicans with their irresponsible, deficit-boosting tax cuts really have a chance of winning power? Suddenly Democrats are champions of the status quo and the darlings of Wall Street, while Republicans, touting child tax credits and a 15 per cent across-the-board tax cut for all, sound more populist than their opponents ever did.

In part, of course, the President is bowing to the inevitable. America is shifting rightward—and he knows it. True, he may be credited with fostering a new post-Cold War consensus across the US political establishment, based on a reduced role for government, free trade and "family values". But these are traditionally Republican issues and Mr Clinton's tactic, so successful thus far, has been to smother his opponents—co-opting their popular ideas such as welfare reform, law and order, even a balanced budget, and demonising the rest as callous extremism. The latter category embraces Republican plans for education and the environment, but above all what Democrats dishonestly portray as the Republican goal of "slashing" Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

No matter that the "cuts" are a reduction in, not a reversal of, future growth in entitlement programmes which must be adjusted if the budget deficit is not to soar early in the next century, as baby boomers reach retirement. The President was a closet Republican, Bob Dole mocked at a campaign rally in New Jersey last week: "Give him 10 minutes and he'll probably show up here." To which the Democrats reply with an ad that sums up their entire reelection strategy: a malign image of House Speaker Newt Gingrich superimposed on the Oval Office, and a voice-over making clear that continued occupancy of that room by Bill Clinton was the last hope of preventing decency disappearing completely from the country's governance.

By the lights of an election campaign, the policy is working. But if so, the Democrats have their opponents to thank for it—Mr Gingrich's singular achievement in turning himself into the most unpopular politician in America during his first year as Speaker, the Republicans' cross obsession with overturning even minimal gun control, and their travails with abortion. Democratic policies are almost entirely lacking, even though the President will paper over their absence by unveiling "30 to 40" initiatives for the party consists of saying what it will not do. And even in this unanchored age, senseless, narrow can only go so far. In the basic stuff of politics, the war of ideas, they are outgunned by the Republicans.

The old Democrat enre coalition of minorities, liberals, blue-collar workers from the old industrial belt and Southern Dixiecrats is losing its last two components: the industrial workers lured by the siren call of the suburbs and transformed into Reagan Democrats, and the South in the process of a historic secular switch to Republicanism, set in motion by the Johnson civil rights legislation of the 1960s. More than half the population lives in the suburbs; they are now the citadel of Republicanism.

Plainly, transformation of the party is required; but compared with changes in the Labour Party in Britain, it has been modest indeed. Clinton won election as a "New Democrat". Yet he governed for his first two years as an Old Democrat, committed not simply to consolidating government but to expanding it—culminating in the health-care reform disaster that preceded his party's midterm rout in 1994. Then came the tactical shift to the "tri-angulation" espoused by his newly favoured political strategist Dick Morris, of a midway course between the Republicans and his own Democratic minority on Capitol Hill.

Welfare reform, however, has only laid bare the limits of this approach. Last week, for purely electoral reasons, Mr Clinton agreed to sign a Republican-driven measure on which he acknowledged, he had "grave doubts". Faced with liberal uproar at the party's abandonment of guaranteed federal assistance to poor children, in

place since FDR's New Deal, the President then proclaimed he would seek to modify it. In so doing he has opened himself to Republican derision, while failing to quell unrest within his own party. Welfare reform will be the joker in the well-ordered Chicago pack.

But Mr Clinton's handling of it is symbolic of much more—of the Democratic crisis and the conflict within the party between what it would like to be, and what it has to be. If he is re-elected, a fascinating question arises: how would this politician, whose career has been an eternal campaign, govern when there are no more campaigns to be fought? Ideally he will work towards a bipartisan deal on social security and entitlement reform. But he will also have to make the New Democratic Party a reality. Republicans will not have a death wish for ever.

William Hartston

## Report from the P files

Think of the odder topics of news stories this month: we have had penguins (both boardroom dealings in the biscuits and proposals to bar-code the flippered ones), prostitutes (legalising them and illegalising their calling cards), phone numbers and life on other planets. What they all have in common is, of course, the letter P.

Was this all, in the first two weeks of P-registration cars, a marketing device by the motor industry? We have done some statistical tests.

The table lists, in the first column, the number of articles in the national press over the first two weeks in August this year featuring each of the listed words. The second column is the fortnightly average over the past year.

Penguins, prostitutes and phones are all significantly ahead of expectations. But the rate of increase of abortions (included as a non-P word to act as a control) is far higher. Yet the Abortion figure is only a by-product of the Pro-life lobby. The word "Pro-life" featured 81 times in the fortnight compared with an average of 5.4. The case for the P-bias seems very strong indeed. For a broader picture, we must compare appearances in newspapers during the first six months of this year with the same period in 1995.

	1-14 Aug	Avg
Penguin	64	48.4
Prostitute	104	88.0
Phone	751	707.6
Abortion	286	57.2

	1995	1996
Penguin	619	642
Prostitute	1167	1117
Abortion	708	745
Yuppie	275	270
Ostrich	182	315
Squirrel	223	276
Monse	63	72
Kangaroo	261	190

Penguins and prostitutes have scarcely changed, with a rate of almost two prostitutes per penguin. Yuppies (acting as a statistical control for the prostitutes) remain almost constant. The most dramatic increase has been in ostriches (up 73 per cent) and squirrels (up 14 per cent). The 23 per cent drop in kangaroos is hard to explain. The crucial test is the stories of life on Mars. Surely, if the automobile spin-doctors have been at work, it should have been Pluto in 1996 and Neptune in 1995 (figure of N-registrations). In fact, Pluto sightings in July 1996 were indeed up to 12 from 9 the previous year, but in the same periods Neptune almost doubled from 13 to 24. We conclude that car registrations are not affecting the news.

THE CENTRAL FACTS FROM THE COURSES YOU ALWAYS MEANT TO TAKE, IN 25 LECTURES



WEEK 4 DAY 1

Renaissance Art

VISITING LECTURER: Helen Langdon

A final examination will be set at the end of term. All graduates will be awarded a diploma and the ten best results will receive a year's subscription to the Independent



view of the valley of the Arno, Antonio demonstrates other naturalist effects, creating atmospheric space through the soft play of light and shade that gleams on the river and fades on a distant horizon.

To Vasari this naturalism of the 15th century rapidly came to seem a "dry, hard, harsh style", and it was eclipsed by the "inspired grace" and monumentality of the great 16th-century painters, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, who were accorded a quasi-divine stature. Art now aspired to an ideal beauty, that should surpass nature; 15th-century clarity yielded to the soft shadows of Leonardo, which created a mysterious and poetic vision, and the grandeur of Raphael's Madonnas were both visionary and yet warmly human. For Michelangelo, man is raised to heaven by the contemplation of human beauty, and the heroic yet suffering and defiant male nudes of the Sistine ceiling suggest a yearning for a spiritual beauty that transcends reality.

Most Renaissance art was religious, but artists also evoked the lost world of classical antiquity. In Venice, poets and painters recreated the ancient dream of an Arcadian landscape, peopled by gods and shepherds, whose beauties offered refreshment and a natural eroticism. Such a landscape

forms the setting for Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1520-30; London, National Gallery) in which the sensual beauty of antique myth is radiantly brought to life. Inspired by Catullus, it shows the discovery of an abandoned Ariadne by the god Bacchus and his frenzied train. At the picture's centre, Bacchus, "seeking thee Ariadne and fired with thy love", leaps from his chariot, creating a sense of sudden revelation of both the terror and beauty of the pagan world. A powerful nude grapples with snakes, evoking the newly discovered and celebrated classical sculpture, the *Laokoon*. The picture celebrates love, and glows with the rich beauty of precious pigments, setting the ultramarine expanse of the sky against earthy browns and greens. Titian invested the medium of oil on canvas with new strength, and Venetian colourism was to dominate European art in the following centuries.

In the modern era, the most revered Renaissance artists are perhaps those who used their skills for non-naturalistic ends; Uccello, whose passion for perspective created a highly unreal and fantastic world, and Piero della Francesca, who united an intense naturalism with a poetic response to the abstract beauty of space and form.

Tomorrow: Modern Art

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## obituaries / gazette

## Victor Ambartsumian

Within the Soviet Union Victor Ambartsumian pursued twin careers as both a leading astronomer and a powerful politician who rose to represent his native Armenia as a deputy in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

Born in Tbilisi, Georgia in 1908 and educated in Leningrad, his work first came to prominence in physics when in 1929 with Dmitry Nansenko he published a paper demonstrating that atomic nuclei could not be made from protons and electrons. Three years later this was confirmed when Sir James Chadwick discovered neutrons, which with protons make up atomic nuclei.

Ambartsumian worked for some years at the Pulkovo Observatory, near Leningrad, where he turned his attention to the transfer of radiation through stellar atmospheres in the approximation where the curvature of the stratification is neglected. There he discovered an important new invariance principle later taken up by Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar, and demonstrated his formidable powers in analytic mathematics.

Thus he was already well known internationally when in 1943 he moved back to his native Armenia to found the world-famous Birkbeck Observatory in 1944 (he remained its Director until 1988) on

Mount Aragats, north of Yerevan, the Armenian capital, and to become Professor of Astrophysics at Yerevan University in 1947.

Here he developed the idea that explosions from a very dense state are associated with the formation of stars, star clusters, galaxies and even the universe itself. He showed that most young stars are not gravitationally bound in clusters but are members of expanding associations, and this was soon widely accepted. He regarded this expansion as a relic of the creation process and looked for explosions as a sign of creation in all astronomical objects from flare stars to galaxies and the universe.

Explosions in galactic nuclei and quasars are now widely accepted phenomena and while these were certainly predicted by Ambartsumian's ideas, those ideas themselves are not widely held. Nevertheless, it was his relentless quest to get evidence to further these ideas concerning astronomical explosions that led him to push for better equipment for the observatory.

He directed campaigns of discovery and observation of many of the most interesting objects in the sky including flare stars in clusters and associations, active galaxies and quasars. Without the equipment he fought for, such well-known

astronomical catalogues of active galaxies as those of Markarian and Arakelian would never have been produced and Gurzadian's studies of flare stars could not have been made.

Ambartsumian put Armenia on the astronomical map. He could never have achieved all this without his skills as a politician. From 1940 he was a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, became president of the Armenian Academy of Sciences 1946-93, served as a Deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from 1950 and was a member of the foreign affairs committee of the Soviet Union as well as holding similar posts in the Armenian Communist Party. In 1989, when aged 80, he went on a three-week hunger strike to attract the Soviet government's attention to the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave's drive to secede from Azerbaijan and join Armenia.

He was twice a Hero of Soviet Labour and held the Hammer and Sickle Gold Medal and five Orders of Lenin among other Communist awards. He was president of the International Astronomical Union 1961-64 and of the International Council of Scientific Unions 1968-72.

His many academic honours include membership of the USSR Academy of Sciences,

and foreign membership of the Royal Society, the US National Academy and the Indian Academy of Sciences. After the collapse of the Soviet Union he was awarded the medal of a National Hero of Armenia.

Victor Ambartsumian was a broad-shouldered thickset man of medium height, quick intellect and strong character. It was best to have him on your side in any argument. His love of poetry and music was shared with his wife Vera.

D. Lynden-Bell

Victor Ambartsumian, astrophysicist and politician: born Tbilisi, Georgia 18 September 1908; lecturer and research worker, Leningrad University 1931-43; corresponding member, USSR Academy of Sciences 1939-53; member 1953-96; member, Communist Party of the Soviet Union 1940-96; member, Armenian Academy of Sciences 1943-96; President 1947-93; Honorary President 1993-96; Founder and Director, Birkbeck Astrophysics Observatory 1944-88; Professor of Astrophysics, Yerevan University 1947-96; Vice-President, International Astronomical Union 1948-55; President 1961-64; Deputy, Supreme Soviet USSR 1950-91; President, International Council of Scientific Unions 1968-72; married 1931 (two sons and two daughters); died Mount Aragats, Armenia 12 August 1990.



Ambartsumian put Armenia on the astronomical map and founded the Birkbeck Observatory

## Brian Oddie

Brian Oddie had the unusual distinction of gaining an international reputation in two quite different fields, athletics and meteorology.

He was educated at Luton Grammar School and Queen Mary College, London, where he took a degree in Physics which might have been even higher were it not for his running.

In athletics he represented Britain on many occasions, running in the 1928 Olympic Games, in the 5,000 metres, against the legendary Nurmio of Finland and winning a gold medal in the 1930 Empire Games.

Oddie joined the Meteorological Office in 1926 and retired in 1966 as Deputy Director. The Meteorological Office was formed in 1854 so that, according to Hansard, "we might know in this metropolis the condition of the weather 24 hours beforehand [laughter]". Its first head was Admiral Robert FitzRoy, who was captain of the *Beagle* on the remarkable survey voyage during which Charles Darwin made the observations later used in developing his theories of evolution. FitzRoy set up a system for communicating weather observations by telegraph and the first storm warning for shipping was issued on 6 February 1861.

Brian Oddie's first job placed him in the forefront of meteorological research in connection with the airship development programme. This came to an abrupt end in 1930 with the R101 disaster but the results, embodied in papers on low-level wind structure, have had a long-lasting value.

Oddie became a practising weather forecaster, serving both war and peacetime in places as different as the north-west frontier in India and the Shetland Islands. In those days all the charts were plotted by hand with twin black and red pens and there was no assistance in analysis and forecasting from computer models, satellite pictures or weather radar.

In 1955 he returned to research and established himself in atmospheric chemistry, where his realistic opinions on the subject of rain-making were not always well received. As Deputy Director from 1959 he was much involved with techniques of observing the weather and the planning and installation of the high-speed computer, Comet.

High-speed then would mean desk-top now, but developments in numerical models of the atmosphere taken forward by others have since transformed the science of weather forecasting, which has always been a science, though perhaps in his time more tinged with the art of experience.

Brian Oddie was gentle, compassionate and intelligent. He was a man with a child-like passion in whatever took his interest. This varied enormously and included games-playing, music, history, astronomy, carpentry and, most importantly, his grandchildren.

At bridge, he founded the local league in Bracknell, still flourishing over 30 years later. With his wife Phyl, he played a mean game; they took up the Precision Club system in their eighties and were still winning events at a combined age of over 180.

He became the president of the local history society and had a particular interest in local church history and the history of pub signs.

Brian Oddie lived his 91 years to the full. He was a broad and cultured man with a twinkle of good-humour. I imagine he is the only person to have quoted Gertrude Stein at a postings board meeting of the Meteorological Office.

Colin Flood

Brian Cecil Vernon Oddie, meteorologist: born Luton, 15 May 1905; staff Meteorological Office 1926-66; Deputy Director 1959-66; CBE 1965; married 1933 Phyllis Bate (one son, one daughter); died Bracknell, Berkshire 7 August 1990.

## Duncan Munro Kerr

With the death of Duncan Munro Kerr, the sport of sailing has lost one of its ablest administrators and one who had been expected to play an even greater role both nationally and internationally in the years ahead. He was lost at sea in the early hours of 13 August: he had been competing in the yacht *Trocar* in the Royal Ocean Racing Club's Cowes to Rotterdam race and was 27 miles off Ostend on the final leg of the course to Rotterdam when the accident occurred.

During his early years, Munro Kerr had shown little interest in the sailing that was to become the dominant recreational interest of his adult life. Instead, he spent much of his free time during his school years riding. He devoted a gap year after Marlborough College to his showjumping career, which culminated in his participation as a member of the British Showjumping Team in competitions in France, Poland and Zimbabwe in 1974-75.

On graduating in Law from Bristol University, he decided to follow in the footsteps of his late father, Andrew Munro Kerr, and was called to the Bar in 1978. Munro Kerr joined what was then John Edwards's chambers in Queen Elizabeth Building, Temple, as his first pupil. In January 1976, he remained there throughout his career as a barrister.

Having started in common law, most of his career was devoted to criminal work, specialising more recently in commercial fraud cases. He had been appointed earlier this year for appointment as an Assistant Recorder, due to commence sitting in 1997.

Shortly after graduating, Munro Kerr had been introduced to the sport of offshore racing by a friend from his Bristol days, Nick Playfair, who was looking for crew for his 37ft 1966 Sparkman & Stephens One Tonner, *Clarinet*. It was to this sport that he was to devote most of his leisure time for the remainder of his life, through which he met his wife, and which led to what was tantamount in recent years to a second, parallel, career as a yachting administrator.

Munro Kerr worked on *Clarinet* from 1976 to 1979 and was a co-owner from 1982 to 1984, competing in many of the Royal Ocean Racing Club's races in the Channel and on the east coast. During those years, *Clarinet* won his class in many of the races and the 1982 Class V Sea-



Pursuit of excellence: Munro Kerr competing in the 1985 Fastnet race

son's Points Championship in both Open and Restricted divisions.

Munro Kerr first met Catherine Greville in the Island Sailing Club in Cowes during the 1978 season. He was already an experienced offshore racer, having competed in her first offshore race at the age of 11 with her father, Nick Greville, in *Trocar*, a 34ft Holman & Pye sloop.

Munro Kerr became a co-owner of *Trocar* with his future father-in-law in 1985. They won their class in the Royal Ocean Racing Club's Fastnet races of 1985 and 1989 and came second in 1987 and 1991; they also won the 1987 Class V Season's Points Championship in both Division One and the Restricted division, among many other successes.

Munro Kerr served on the main committee of the Royal Ocean Racing Club from 1982 to 1986 and as a Rear Commodore from 1986 to 1988. He was chairman of the Channel Handicap Committee in 1987, a member of the Admiral's Cup Management Committee from 1988 to 1989 and chairman of the selectors for the English team for the Commodore's Cup in 1994 and 1996. He was elected to the main committee for a second time for the current year and was widely considered to be a likely future Commodore of the Club.

His performance in committee and as a flag officer of the club led to his election as a member of the council of the

Royal Yachting Association, the national authority for the sport of sailing in the UK, from 1988 to 1991 and from 1992 to 1995. He also served on many of its committees, and was a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron, the Bar Yacht Club and West Mersea Yacht Club. At an international level, Munro Kerr had been a member of the Offshore Racing Council since 1990, responsible for the United Kingdom, Ireland and Hong Kong, and a member since 1990 of the Constitution Committee of the International Yacht Racing Union (now the International Sailing Federation), the top administrative authority for sailing worldwide. As Vice-Chairman of the Constitution Committee since 1994, he had been active in completing the recent restructuring of the union's constitution and in updating its regulations.

Duncan Munro Kerr was a handsome man with a first class brain and a keen wit. He was always kind, totally honest and utterly loyal to his friends. He owed his considerable success in his legal career, in his riding and sailing and in his work as a yachting administrator to these qualities, together with his physical and moral courage, his high standards and his unflinching pursuit of excellence.

Colin Campbell

Duncan Munro Kerr, barrister and yachtsman: born Woking, Surrey 24 January 1933; married 1985 Catherine Greville (three daughters); died 13 August 1990.

The serendipitous invention of the word Wasp, denoting not the yellow-and-black striped insect, *vespa vulgaris*, but a White Anglo-Protestant, has changed perceptions of American society and even American history. The world owes it to an eminent sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania with the magnificently appropriate Wasp name of E. Digby Baltzell. Not all his friends and students knew that the E. stood for Edward.

This pregnant neologism saw the light of day because Baltzell found that while crisper appellations such as "Jews" or even "Roman Catholics" fitted into statistical tables, "White Anglo-Saxon Protestants" did so only with difficulty.

Baltzell and his coinage of the word Wasp have helped to draw attention to the dirty little secret that in a society that boasts of being classless, there is and has always been an American aristocracy. Not that there was anything dirty about this secret for Baltzell.

He was, and I think he would have been prepared to admit, in a benign sense a snob. He dedicated one of his books to "all my undergraduate friends at the University of Pennsylvania, many of them grandsons of immigrants to the urban fron-

tier, who, in spite of their possessing too many Jagnars and mink-coated mothers, have constantly been renewed by faith in the American Dream of unlimited opportunity".

Baltzell was born in Philadelphia and grew up in Chestnut Hill, then the best address in the city. He went to St Paul's, an Episcopal boarding school in New Hampshire and then to the University of Pennsylvania, not a state institution, but an Ivy League school.

After serving as a pilot in the US Navy, he did his doctorate in Sociology before returning to Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, to teach, which he continued to do until his retirement in 1986.

I remember him from the 1950s, a dapper figure in tweed jackets and bow ties, popular in a slightly aloof way, but always courteous and accessible. Far more important to him than his personal preference for English clothes and for the ethos and manners of the gentleman was his conviction that aristocracy was necessary for the provision of leadership, both nationally and internationally.

He began his best-known and most influential book, *The Protestant Establishment* (1964), by asserting that while socialist faith might aim for a classless society, the United States

stressed equality of opportunity in an open class system.

He quoted Karl Marx to the effect that "the more a ruling class is able to assimilate the most prominent men of the dominated classes, the more stable and dangerous is its rule". He used the Lincoln family as an example. Everyone knew, he pointed out, that Abraham Lincoln came of humble origins. Not everyone remembered that he sent his son to Phillips Andover, the American Eton, and to Harvard College, and that Robert Todd Lincoln was altogether the epitome of the Victorian aristocrat, clubman and gentleman.

In spite of his preference for an aristocratic leadership in society, Baltzell's views were liberal. He believed that the American upper class, the Protestant aristocracy, had made a historic mistake, damaging to the nation, when it failed to assimilate the most successful and talented members of other groups, and especially Jews, into its social system.

Much of *The Protestant Establishment* is devoted to the social exclusion of Jews from WASP clubs, which he called "the dishonourable treatment of distinguished Jews by members of the old stock establishment". But behind this specific and arguably somewhat parochial concern, his

abiding interest was the decline of authority in American society, which he attributed in part to the decline of aristocracy.

In another study, *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia* (1979), he concluded that the Protestant elite of Boston, for all its snootiness and hardness, had been more effective than Philadelphia's dominant Quakers, whose traditions of modesty made them less effective.

In a 1958 book, he described the rise of the Philadelphia elite from which he sprang: his father was a successful insurance broker. In the 1960s, he argued strongly that the existing elites must assimilate talented black leaders into a national aristocracy.

In his later years he was much exercised by the way the WASPs were losing influence. He considered, and taught, that they had failed the nation by abandoning their tradition of public service, and that they were just not up to the job in competition with Jewish, Irish and Asian leaders.

Godfrey Hodgson

Edward Digby Baltzell, sociologist: born Philadelphia 14 November 1915; married 1943 Jan Fieger (deceased; two daughters); 1961 *Jockey*, *Carlson*; died Philadelphia 17 August 1990.

## Roger Hume

As man-of-the-earth Bert Fry in *The Archers*, radio's longest-running serial, Roger Hume was known to millions as Phil and Jill Archer's farmhand, often finding himself in conflict with other residents of Ambridge.

Born in London in 1940, the son of George Hume, a general manager of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, the actor began his career as an assistant stage manager at Wimbledon Theatre, and had the same role in the original West End production of the hit musical *Oliver!* (1960), starring Ron Moody, at the New Theatre.

He also worked behind the scenes on the films *Carry On Regardless* (1961) and *The Road to Hong Kong* (1961), starring Bing Crosby. Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour, Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra, as well as being a flying-wire operator with the legendary Crazy Gang comedy team.

After three years in a teacher training college, Hume returned to the stage as an actor.

He played leading roles with repertory companies across the country, small parts with the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford, and acted in the original London production of *Teeth n' Smiles*, and Edward Bond's *The Fool*, both at the Royal Court Theatre. He also appeared in a revival of *Bilko* at the Vaudeville Theatre, and *The Resistant Rise of Arturo Ui*, at the Queen's Theatre.

In 1979, Hume created the role of Herbert Pinnager in his one-man play *Alfred Shaugnessy's Old Herbaceous*, at Salisbury Playhouse, before repeating it at the Mayfair Theatre, in the West End. Such was the play's success that he later recorded it for television and radio, toured it in Britain, Australia, Zimbabwe and at the Charleston Festival in South Carolina, and performed it in front of the Queen at Windsor Castle. He also wrote and starred in the one-man shows *Winston*, a portrait of Sir Winston Churchill in old age, and



Hume, battle over bats in *The Archers* Photograph: Newsteam

Please Sir, a teacher's humorous viewpoint of school life.

On television, Hume acted in programmes such as *Special Branch*, *Play for Today*, *Coronation Street*, *Edward and Mrs Simpson* (as Humphrey Butler), *Rumpole of the Bailey*, *Agatha Christie's Poirot*, *Fawlty Towers*, *The Bill* and *EastEnders*. He was also in the films *Something Like the Truth* (1972, later retitled *The*

*Offence*), *Car Trouble* (1985, starring Julie Walters and Ian Charleson) and *A Fish Called Wanda* (1988).

But it was as Bert Fry in *The Archers* since 1988 that he was best known. He had previously played two other roles in the serial - joining it in 1979 as John Tregorran, then taking the part of Sir Sidney Goodman, who was at one of Jack Woolley's shooting parties. He was last heard as Bert Fry on 14 August, when he and arch-rival Tom Forrest were locked in battle over the removal of bats from Ambridge's church.

Roger Hume, himself a Church of England lay preacher, acted in more than 200 other radio productions, including many plays, as well as providing voice-overs for documentaries and reading stories.

Anthony Hayward

Roger Hume, actor: born London 19 November 1941; married (two sons); died Banbury, Oxfordshire 24 August 1990.

## Birthdays

The Duke of Gloucester, 52; Mr H.W. "Bunny" Austin, former tennis player, 90; Sir Kenneth Blaxter, former senior civil servant, 74; The Right Rev Alan Chester, Bishop of Blackburn, 59; Mrs Joan Clancy, Headmistress, North London Collegiate School, 57; Mr Howard Clark, golfer, 42; Mr Michael Cokerrell, television reporter, 56; Mr Richard Dale, former High Commissioner to Zimbabwe, 54; Mr Peter Fowler, former High Commissioner to Bangladesh, 61; Mr Stuart Graham, former chairman, International Commodities Clearing House, 75; Mr Tim Mahy, radio news reporter and presenter, 49; Sir Ian McGregor, tropical medicine authority, 74; Mr David Martin, MEP, 42; Mr Malcolm Pyrah, show jumper, 55; Mr Graham Riddick, MP, 41; Miss Alison Steadman, actress, 50; Mr Dennis Turner, MP, 54; General Sir Harry Tuzo, former deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, 79; Professor John Vane, former Principal, World College, 74; The Right Rev Maurice Wood,

former Bishop of Norwich, 80; Mr Steve Wright, disc jockey, 42.

## Anniversaries

Birthday Sir Robert Walpole, Earl of Orford, statesman, 1676; Joseph Michell (Montagu), balloonist, 1740; Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier, chemist, 1743; Joseph Christoph Kessler (Notzler), pianist and composer, 1800; Prince Albert, Consort to Queen Victoria, 1819; Stephen Joseph Perry, astronomer and Jesuit, 1833; John William Mackail, scholar, 1859; Lee De Forest, radio and television inventor, 1873; Sir John Buchan, first Baron Tweedsmuir, Governor-General of Canada and novelist, 1875; Guillaume Apollinaire (Wilhelm Apollinaire de Kostrowitzky), poet, 1878; Jules Romains (Louis-Henri Jean Farigoule), novelist, playwright and poet, 1885; Christopher William Bradshaw (hereward), aviator, 1914; Charles Boyer, actor, 1914; this day Julius Caesar landed in Britain, 55 BC; King Edward III, aided by the Black Prince, his son,

defeated the French at the Battle of Crécy, 1346; Frederick the Great repelled the Russian invading army at the indecisive Battle of Zorndorf, 1758; Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah* was first performed, Birmingham Festival, 1846; Krakow, the island volcano, began erupting, killing over 36,000 people, 1883; under the 19th Amendment, women in the United States were granted the right to vote, 1920; the Anglo-Egyptian alliance was signed, 1936; the XXth Olympic Games opened in Munich, 1972; Cardinal Albino Luciani was elected Pope John Paul I, 1978. Today is the Feast Day of St Brigidine, archbishop of Canterbury, St Elizabeth of the Ages, St Herutun, St John Wall, St Mary Desmaisons, St Pandonia and St Teresa Jornet Ibars.

## Wills

Arthur Leslie Noel Douglas Houghton, Lord Houghton of Sowerby of Blethynghy, Surrey, the politician, left estate valued at £247,226 net.

Sir William Henry Nairn Wilkinson, of London W11, Chairman, Nature Conservancy Council 1983-91, left estate valued at £712,354 net.

Sir Stephen James Hamilton Miller, of Woking, Surrey, the ophthalmologist, Surgeon-Oculist to the Queen 1974-88, left estate valued at £681,579 net.

Sir Harry Camplin, of Stanmore, Middlesex, Director of the Central Statistical Office, Cabinet Office 1941-67, and Director, UN Statistical Office 1946-47, left estate valued at £410,934 net. He left £1,000 to the Parochial Church Council of St John Evangelist, Farnworth, Lancashire, and the residue of the estate between the Royal Statistical Society and the Manchester Statistical Society.

Norman Frank Thacker, of Brailford, Derbyshire, left estate valued at £5,706,479 net.

Charles Barneil Cameron Harvey, of Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire, left estate valued at £3,328,807 net.

Bates Christians Dykes, of Torquay, Devon, left estate valued at £3,236,699 net.

## Church appointments

The following appointments have been announced by the Church of England:

The Rev Kathleen Bette, Assistant Curate (NSM), Newcastle St Gabriel (Newcastle) to be Assistant Curate (NSM), Wilford Hill St Paul (Southwell).

The Rev Helen Begley, Assistant Curate, Leamington Spa (Leamington) to be Chaplain to the Dean and Hard of Hearing People (Salisbury).

The Rev David Haslam, Curate, Ipswich St Helen (St Edmundsbury and Ipswich) to be Vicar, Shirley (Windsor).

The Rev Christopher Houghton, Assistant Curate, Southport St Philip and St Paul and Chaplain to Family NHS Unit to be Chaplain, Church and South Bible NHS Trust (Blackburn).

The Rev Robin Morrison, Principal Social Responsibility Officer (Dorset) to be Team Vicar, Southampton Team Ministry, with responsibility for Consumers and Economic Development (Widewater).

The Rev John Nicholson, Vicar, Oriskany St John (Chesham) to be Rector, Church Oakley and Wootton (Widewater).

The Rev Paul Oliver, Vicar, Earlsdon St Anne, and Rural Dean of Norwich South to be also as Honorary Canon of Norwich Cathedral (Norwich).

The Rev Richard Ormston, Rector, Collingwood with Conventual and Wilton Makers to be also Rural Dean of Wootton (Peterborough).

The Rev Sarah Sewell, Assistant Chaplain, Derriford Hospital, Plymouth (Exeter) to be Chaplain, South Devon Health Hospital (Exeter).

The Rev Peter Thornton, permission to officiate, Wanganui Diocese, Australia to be Assistant Curate, West Holloway St Luke (London).

The Rev Dr Peter Thomas, Assistant Curate, Berkeley St Nicholas to be Vicar, Aubrey Convent St Mark, Hull (York).

The Rev Geoffrey van der Weegen, Rector, Stumstedt with Godesbe to be also Rural Dean of Woodstock (Oxford).

## RESIGNATIONS

The Rev Dr Murray Dell, Vicar, Lyme Regis (Salisbury), to retire 31 October.

The Rev John Godfrey, Assistant Curate (NSM), West Wootton with Earlsdon, Hampstead Marsh, Ipswich and Combe (Oxford) to retire 16 November.

The Rev Peter Rowland, Vicar, Bendon and Pinner with West Wootton and Earlsdon (Oxford) to retire 31 August.

The Rev Vernon Scott, Rector, East and West Ruffham, Houghton-le-Spring, Ilkley and Wetherby, and Pilsley-le-Spring, South Raynham, East with West Raynham, Houghton-le-Spring and Wetherby (York) to retire 30 September.

Announcements for Gazette 2/RTHS. MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2016, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notice of funerals, forthcoming marriages, marriages) must be submitted in writing (or heard) and are charged at £10 a line. VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

The Independent's main switchboard number is 0171-290 2000.

## Changing of the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. 11th Battalion Irish Guards mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Coldstream Guards.



BUSINESS NEWS DESK: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2098

... ..



## SCIENCE

Edited by  
Charles Arthur

# White coats don't lie ...

... do they? A new play about the market pressures on scientists may touch a raw nerve. By **Hugh Aldersley-Williams**

**A**l, the mediocre researcher suddenly promoted to head of department, is discussing the amazing work of his colleague Chris with his non-scientist girlfriend, Joanna. He should be elated for his colleague. She finds he is not.

"But you've seen it work, the demonstration; you've seen it," she says encouragingly.

"It's only - I can't see how he's done it," he answers. Realisation of the possibility of a far more interesting event - to a non-scientist - dawns. "If it was a fake - Jesus! A fraud ..."

And it is. In Stephen Poliakoff's new play, *Blinded by the Sun*, which opens at the National Theatre next Tuesday, the perpetration of a fraud is used to explore the pressures on scientists. For whereas financial fraudsters are lured by money and greed, fraudulent scientists cheat themselves above all. What makes them do it?

Poliakoff says, "The play isn't

anti-science. It's anti what surrounds science. It's about the long-distance creator being in danger, which I think is true in most fields, but particularly in science, where it really matters."

Chris (played by Duncan Bell) is a young researcher who claims to have invented a device that uses sunlight to liberate hydrogen from water as a limitless source of energy - shades of "cold fusion". He cheats partly to achieve fame, but also because he feels overwhelming pressure to achieve a result.

The career of Al (Douglas Hodge) prospers from his manipulation of the ensuing fiasco. He is an opportunist but also a good administrator and judge of merit - not least of Chris's results, which he wants confirmed.

Elmor (Frances de la Tour) is the senior member of the laboratory. Highly respected and liberally funded for great work done many years before, she is allowed to pursue her own project and resents being asked

much about it. "I can understand having a history of achievement and expecting because of that to have bought time to go on, even if you are not delivering 'box office'," says Poliakoff. "That attitude is fascinating because it has a lot of right on its side, but it also makes people jolly cross."

In the play, Elmor cannot countenance the idea that Chris may have cheated; she advises Al to do nothing.

Poliakoff is well placed to understand these dilemmas. One of his distant cousins was Rosalind Franklin, the crystallographer who played a vital part in discovering the structure of DNA, but was robbed of her share of glory. His brother Martin is Professor of Chemistry at the University of Nottingham. His sister is a doctor.

He believes that today's research environment, where work must increasingly demonstrate "relevance" and be delivered to deadlines, can only increase the temptation to



Stephen Poliakoff, above, whose new play explores the issues surrounding the kind of research which leads to eye-catching outcomes such as ear-shaped prostheses implanted in a mouse's back

Photographs: Alan Titmuss/Globenet



fraud. He cites the case of biologists who used felt-tipped pens to exaggerate tumours grown on mice as an example of the opportunism that begins to eat away at scientific truth. "There is an impatience for things to show a return," he says.

Some work seems more relevant than it is - for instance, the tissue in the shape of a human ear that was grafted on to the back of a mouse, with its false implication that such tissue could be grafted onto a human. Other work hops aboard spurious handwagons. "When *Jurassic Park* came out, scientists working in that field popped up and said they could

bring back dinosaurs. Is it a total coincidence that this Mars discovery has come out when *Independence Day* is [a] box-office hit?"

In the play, Al realises that "most work should be geared to the marketplace" - but that not all work can be expected to deliver predicted commercial benefits within known timeframes.

This is already understood by many of those who direct science funding. "Most of all, we still need idiosyncratic, pioneering research with no commercial importance," says Philip Harrison of Paresel International, who undertakes funda-

mental research for pharmaceutical firms. "But that research must be dovetailed into the world of commerce."

Scientists themselves hold differing views of how to do this dovetailing. Professor Fraser Stoddart of Birmingham University believes scientists should be held more accountable, assessed by criteria such as papers published and their "impact factors". "It can be compared to the kind of training needed to get a gold at the Olympics," he says. It is not enough just to turn up, and run the 100m. It needs long preparation.

But science is not so predictable. Sir Harold Kroto at the

University of Sussex was the only British scientist involved in the 1985 discovery of buckminsterfullerene, the molecule that constitutes the third form of the element carbon, after diamond and graphite. The discovery was serendipitous and unfunded - rather like training for the 100m, but winning the weightlifting. Fortune, they say, favours the prepared mind. But prepared for what?

Once a discovery is made, many feel that the scientists who did the basic research should help realise its potential, although they are seldom the best people to lead the applied research. "Scientists at least understand their

data better than anyone else," says Professor Kroto. "They have a duty to be involved at the interface of science and society and commerce."

Gerard Fairclough, founder of the biotechnology company Celltech, agrees. "If a discovery is made in the course of curiosity-driven research which has applications, then it is the duty of the scientist concerned that it gets applied. It is entirely reasonable that the taxpayer should insist on the proper exploitation of a scientific discovery. I'm not asking that they should exploit it themselves, just that they ... hand it over to the right people."

## A chilly outpost of the Solar System that mimics Earth

**S**aturn is centre stage in the sky this month, but for scientists the beautiful ringed world is increasingly being eclipsed in importance by its highest moon, Titan.

When the *Voyager 1* flew past Saturn in 1980, it found Titan is unique among all the moons of all the planets in the Solar System. It is the only moon with more than a trace of atmosphere. In fact, Titan's "air" is twice as dense as Earth's, and - like our planet - the atmosphere is made up mainly of nitrogen. (Hydrogen, methane or carbon dioxide predominate in other planetary atmospheres.)

*Voyager* was programmed to photograph Titan's surface in intimate detail, but all the images showed was unrelieved orange cloud. These clouds held their own fascination, because they are made of organic "gunge". Ultraviolet radiation from the Sun has broken up molecules of methane and ethane in the atmosphere and welded them together as complex molecules.

Drops of sticky rain may fall from the clouds to mingle with pools of liquid ethane on Titan's hidden, chilly surface. At one time, astronomers even thought Titan might be covered entirely by a deep ocean of liquid ethane.

But now Athena Coustenis, an astronomer at the Meudon Observatory in Paris, has disproved this theory by taking pictures of the surface of Titan with a telescope on the Earth. She had to employ two new tricks. First, Coustenis observed not

Titan could be an analogue for our own planet, new pictures suggest. By **Heather Couper** and **Nigel Henbest**

light but infra-red radiation, which can penetrate the organic drops in the clouds. Second, she used a giant European telescope at La Silla in Chile that is fitted with "adaptive optics" - a small flexible mirror that continually bends to compensate for blurring caused by the Earth's atmosphere, and so keeps the tiny features on Titan in crisp focus.

Coustenis found several bright regions, indicating that the surface of Titan is mainly solid, though there may be some seas of liquid ethane. There is a polar cap at the north pole, which may consist of frozen ethane or methane "snow". Most exciting is a very bright spot near Titan's equator. It is probably a huge mountain, perhaps three times the height of Mount Everest, and capped with ethane or methane snow.

What has raised such a giant mountain on a world much smaller than the Earth? One strong contender is a vast volcano. A highly volcanic surface would also account for Titan's dense atmosphere, with its rich cocktail of gases. We'll know better when the international *Cassini-Huygens* spacecraft

arrives in 2004. While *Cassini* orbits Saturn, *Huygens* will descend through Titan's clouds and land on the frozen surface. Many scientists see in Titan an analogue for the early Earth, where organic compounds forged by ultraviolet radiation dissolved in the oceans and gave rise to life. Until now, Titan has been regarded as "an early Earth in deep freeze", where the primitive molecules just accumulate on the chilly surface. But if Titan has active volcanoes, which warm their surroundings enough to melt ice into water, then maybe the reactions that formed the first cells on Earth (and possibly Mars) might have occurred on this chilly outpost of the Solar System as well.

**What's Up?**

At its closest to Earth this month, Saturn is visible all night in the south. Although not as brilliant as the brightest stars, it is the most prominent object in a barren region of sky. Another giveaway is its yellow glow: unlike stars, planets don't twinkle. A small telescope will reveal its famous rings and its highest moon, cloud-covered Titan.

The full moon lies near Saturn on 26-27 September. Watch through the early hours of the morning and you'll see a stunning sight. The moon gradually enters the Earth's shadow, and by 3.19am is in total eclipse. As the moon fades, Saturn will appear increasingly brilliant.

It's the second total lunar eclipse this year. In April, the

eclipsed moon appeared a reddish colour, because sunlight was bent around into the Earth's shadow by our planet's atmosphere. No one can predict how bright this month's eclipse will be: check it out for yourself.

Other sights include Jupiter, still shining brightly in the southwest after sunset, and Venus and Mars in the early morning.

**National Astronomy Week.** From 21 to 28 September, Britain celebrates its fifth National Astronomy Week. It commemorates the 150th anniversary of the discovery of Neptune, and also coincides with the total lunar eclipse and the best view of Saturn this year.

Observatories throughout the UK will be opening their doors to the public, and schools will be coordinating astronomy-based projects. For further information, contact National Astronomy Week, Jodrell Bank Science Centre, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 9DL; phone 01477 571874; fax 01477 571875; World Wide Web http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk/~onw96/

**Diary (all times BST)**

4 Sept: 8.07pm moon at last quarter

13 Sept: 0.08am new moon

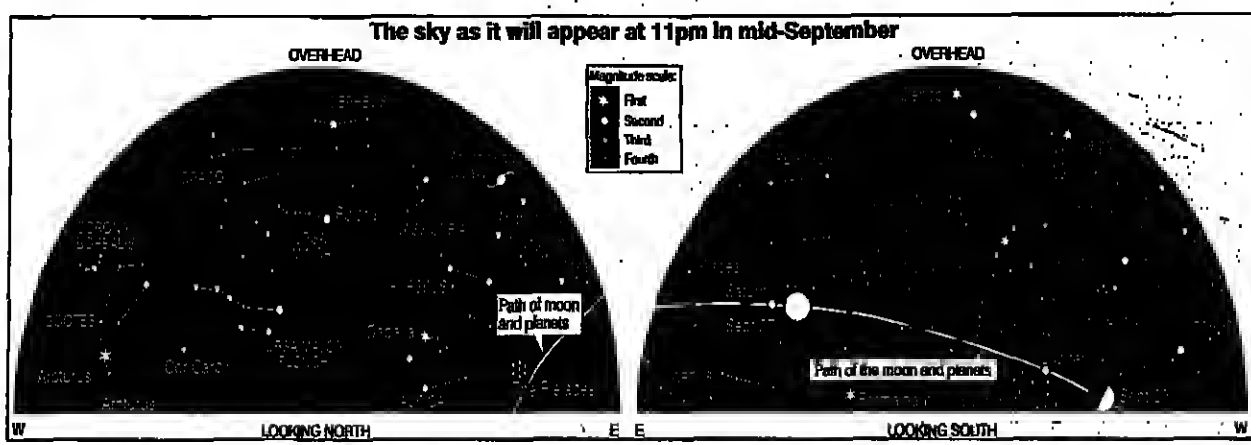
17 Sept: Mercury at inferior conjunction

20 Sept: 12.23pm moon at first quarter

22 Sept: 7pm autumn equinox

26 Sept: Saturn at opposition

27 Sept: 3.51am full moon; 3.19am-4.29am total lunar eclipse



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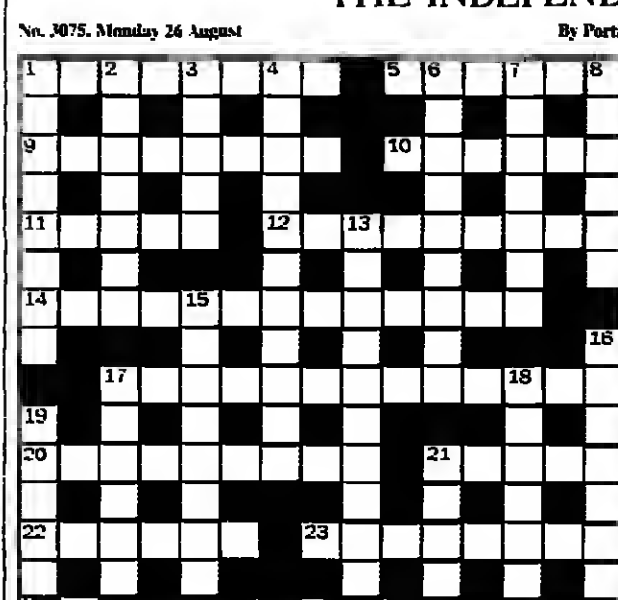
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### THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD



**ACROSS**

1 Crew of one's boat assembled in Canada (8)

5 Crabby youngster? (6)

9 Adjusted radio-set to track orbiting planet (5)

10 Stay to the end of open air demonstrations perhaps (3,3)

11 Austrian pastry's wrong we're told (5)

12 Get through to hit the ball in (5,4)

14 Light bar snack? (4,9)

17 Soon fit the man out for Shakespearean role (5,2,6)

20 Re-align badly attached bracket (5,4)

21 Jack's present show contains one (5)

22 Fuss about society achieving honours (6)

23 Tends to look for visual imagination (5,3)

24 Entirely Latin version (2,4)

25 Back-chat from soldiers over separate quarters (8)

**DOWN**

1 For now is low season (8)

2 Person with a talent for colour (7)

3 Brief from the minister's expected (5)

4 You can't see your way round it (5,6)

6 Travelling, I can head East by rail (9)

7 Prompt right to go into evidence (7)

8 Somewhat reduce unusual article inside (6)

13 One Pole's nasty but harmless (11)

15 Able to run conservation body (9)

16 Sweater I designed so to speak (2,2,4)

17 Water tower? (7)

18 Demanding to leave without information (7)

19 Criticise one American tucking into spicy food (6)

21 Water-snake in the Aegean (5)

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